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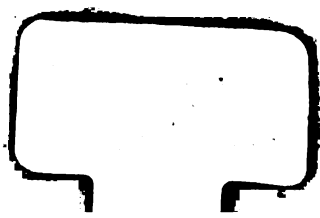
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University of Texas Bulletin

No. 2165: November 20, 1921

The English Bulletin Number 9



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The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.

Sam Houston

Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy. . . . It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge and the only security that freemen desire.

Mirabeau B. Lamar



The English Bulletin

Number 9

**Editors: KILLIS CAMPBELL
L. W. PAYNE, JR.
J. B. WHAREY**

The English Bulletin is intended as an organ for the expression of opinion by teachers of English in Texas concerning pedagogical and other problems that arise in their work. It will appear from one to three times a year.

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THE BEST BOOKS ABOUT THE BALLAD*

BY STITH THOMPSON, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF
ENGLISH, THE UNIVERSITY OF INDIANA

Since the beginning of interest in the English and Scottish Popular Ballad in the early eighteenth century, the literature pertaining to the ballad has grown until it has now reached unwieldy proportions. It is possible, however, by careful selection, to secure most of the outstanding works that go to form the center of a good ballad library in some twenty or thirty volumes. The list which follows consists of two classes of books: collections of ballads and works about the ballad. The collecting of ballads was for the most part accomplished by 1890. The subsequent books are largely theoretical discussions of the ballad and its relation to other forms. The collecting of British ballads in America is the only important exception to this shift of interest.

The world of ballad scholarship is very sharply divided on the question of "communal origin." The books cited below by Professors Gummere, Kittredge, and Hart uphold the theory that the ballads are an outgrowth of poems composed by the primitive crowd, gathered in festive mood. These books elaborate the method whereby ballads or narrative songs could have been composed by the crowd without individual authorship, and could later have undergone such modifications in transmission as to produce the ballads of the collections. The whole theory of "communal

*See the *English Bulletin*, No. 5, for articles on "The Best Books about Milton," "The Best Books about Tennyson," and "The Best Books about Browning"; the *English Bulletin*, No. 7, for articles on "Some Books on Recent English and American Literature" and "The Best Books about the Essay"; the *English Bulletin*, No. 8, for an article on "The Best Books about Shakespeare"; and the *English Bulletin*, No. 9, for an article on "The Best Books about the English Novel."

origin" is challenged in the books by Professors Ker, Henderson, and Pound, who produce facts to support the position that the ballad is quite as individual a production as any other poem. It seems to the present writer that Miss Pound's book surveys the available facts more adequately than any other treatment of the subject.

COLLECTIONS OF BALLADS

(a) *English and Scottish.*

Child, Francis James. *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. 5 vols. Boston, 1882-98. The standard collection of these ballads. A monumental work of scholarship.

Kittredge, George Lyman, and Sargent, Helen Child. *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. 1 vol. Boston, 1904. An abridgement of Child's collection. It contains versions of every ballad.

Percy, Thomas. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. New edition, London, 1887.

Scott, Sir Walter. *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (T. F. Henderson, editor). 2 vols. Edinburgh, 1902.

(b) *Foreign, in English Translation.*

Garnett, Lucy M. J. *Greek Folk Poesy*. 2 vols. London, 1896.

Prior, R. C. A. *Ancient Danish Ballads*. 3 vols. Edinburg, 1860.

Ralston, W. R. S. *Songs of the Russian People*. London, 1892.

Vaceresco, Hélène. *Bard of the Dimbo Vitza*. London, n.d. (A collection of Roumanian folk-songs.)

(c) *Foreign, in the Original.*

Erk, Ludwig. *Deutsches Liederhort* (Boehme, editor). 3 vols. Leipzig, 1893-4.

Grundtvig, Svend. *Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser*. 5 vols. Copenhagen, 1853-78. The standard collection of Danish ballads.

(d) *English and Scottish Ballads in America.*

Campbell, Olive D., and Sharp, Cecil J. *English Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians.* New York, 1917.

Lomax, John A. *Cowboy Songs.* New York, 1910.

Political Ballads.

Percival, Milton. *Political Ballads Illustrating the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole.* Oxford, 1916.

BOOKS ABOUT BALLADS

Gummere, Francis B. *The Popular Ballad.* Boston, 1907.

Gummere, Francis B. *The Beginnings of Poetry.* Boston, 1901.

Hart, Walter Morris. *Ballad and Epic.* Boston, 1907.

Henderson, T. F. *The Ballad in Literature.* Cambridge, 1912.

Hustvedt, Sigurd Bernhard. *Ballad Criticism in Scandinavia and Great Britain.* New York, 1916.

Ker, William Paton. *On the History of the Ballads, 1100-1500.* London, 1910.

Kittredge, George Lyman. Introduction to Kittredge and Sargent's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads.* Boston, 1904.

Mackenzie, William R. *The Quest of the Ballad.* Princeton, 1919.

Martinengo-Cesaresco, Countess. *Essays in the Study of Folksongs.* London and New York, n.d. (Everyman's Library).

Pound, Louise. *Poetic Origins and the Ballad.* New York, 1921.

Besides these books the reader will find good material on the ballad in the files of the *Journal of American Folk-Lore.*

A TEACHER'S TALK TO HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS OF LITERATURE

BY LEONIDAS WARREN PAYNE, JR., PH.D., PROFESSOR OF
ENGLISH, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

"Why do I study literature?" The pupil sometimes asks himself this question in a querulous mood when he faces a particularly irksome task of analysis, or interpretation, or memory or reference work. Well, we shall try to tell you why you study literature. First of all, let us say that you do not study literature merely to pass the course, to earn a unit of credit, to advance a step toward your high-school diploma. It is not merely to fill your mind with outlines of literary history, to memorize definitions and derivations of words, to accumulate phrases and broaden your vocabulary, to assimilate philological facts and acquaint yourself with literary technique, not even to amass a stock of ideas which may be useful to you at some future time. These are all mere by-products, interesting and valuable in themselves, but by no means the main end and aim of your work in literature. The main aim of the study of literature is to enlarge your vision, to develop your artistic and emotional nature, to broaden your intellectual horizon, to touch the deeper springs of your imagination, to arouse and quicken your moral instincts, and to increase your capacity for life and the enjoyment of its finer possibilities. Is not this worth while?

In an essential sense English is the one absolutely indispensable course in all your list of studies, for it is the basis and the tool for the acquisition of knowledge of whatever kind. Moreover, literature is the one pure art course to be found in your high-school curriculum. Music, painting, sculpture, architecture are beyond the reach of the great mass of students who pass through our high schools. Poetry and artistic prose literature furnish us the single fine art which is within the reach of every pupil. The scientific and practical side of language study is found in

grammar and composition; these are the essential tools for language interpretation and self-expression, and they are, of course, in a certain sense cultural, as, for that matter, are all the other subjects in the curriculum. But the purely cultural subject-matter and the purely cultural effects of your high-school course are found largely in the masterpieces of literature.

The wonderful literary heritage of the English-speaking race affords ample material for the development of the finer elements in our natures. Out of the ideals of the past have arisen the ideals of the present, and it is needless to say that the ideals of the past are preserved for us mainly in the literary remains. From *Beowulf* to Browning, from King Alfred to Stevenson, from Chaucer to Masfield, from Milton to Tennyson, from Shakespeare to Galsworthy, from Irving to Mark Twain, from Bryant to Moody, from Poe to O. Henry—all is yours for the mere asking. In the phrase of Milton, the noblest and best spirits of our race “have treasured up their precious life-blood to a life beyond life,” and their dreams, their ideals, their art, their souls are yours. American literature is but a diverging and ever-widening branch of English literature. Hence English literature is in a strict sense a part of our own literature. Chaucer and Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Stevenson are as much the inheritance of an American as are Poe and Hawthorne, Lanier and Whitman. We speak Shakespeare’s language and inherit Shakespeare’s art in America just as truly as does the Englishman dwelling beside quiet Avon stream in Warwickshire. The Anglo-Saxon forefathers are just as truly ours as they are the present-day Englishman’s. The old Celtic legends of King Arthur, the English and Irish fairy tales and myths are just as truly the inheritance of English-speaking Americans as they are of English-speaking men and women on the British islands. The trunk and roots of the great English literary tree give the American and the Canadian and the Australian branches support and sustenance just as truly as they do the modern English and Scottish and Irish branches.

Literature is the spiritual breath of the people; literature is the history of the progress of the soul in man and in races of men. It is not merely the chief source of noble enjoyment and right thinking; it is in reality the receptacle in which is preserved and transmitted to future generations the very life of a people or race. Without visions the people perish, so the Scriptures say; and literature is the conserving medium of the visions, the ideals of any given age and any given people. Without literature, then, there can be no spiritual life, no spiritual progress; without art no people can fully realize the spiritual accomplishments of its past. A land without dreams and memories, without legends and songs, is a desolate and static, perhaps even a dying, land. Therefore we should lay claim to our heritage, take full possession of it, and be thankful for its richness and beauty, its strength and vitality, its moral and spiritual force, even from the Anglo-Saxon beginnings all the way down to the latest productions in both England and America.

The boy or girl, the man or woman, who is ignorant of the great body of literature in our English tongue is not educated in the truest sense, and never can be so considered. It takes more than the mere ability to acquire a livelihood to make a successful career. It takes more than the mere satisfaction of our physical appetites and our material desires to make up a full-rounded life. The spirit must be nurtured and fed as well as the body. One must be prepared to enjoy *life*, not merely *living in physical comfort*; and it is literature above all else that will bring this joy of life.

In a survey course in English literature you will get only a few samples of the best that our great writers of the past have produced. An introductory course is but the talisman, as it were, the "Open Sesame" to an almost limitless hoard of literary wealth. The Prologue and one or two stories from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* give but a foretaste of the rich feast already laid for you in Chaucer's complete works. A few plays and a few songs and sonnets from Shakespeare are but a meager portion of what is ready

at your hand for the mere taking. Books are the cheapest and yet the dearest of our possessions. Libraries everywhere are inviting you to explore their treasures; publishers are offering you whole gold-laden galleons for a mere pittance; thousands of presses are running day and night to pour out an ever-increasing stream of literature, old and new. How can you escape the contagion? Now that books are so easily accessible, how can you fail to become a lover and an eager devourer of good literature? And yet, sad to say, many of us, especially in the period of youth when both leisure and energy are abundant, are neglecting this precious opportunity for self-enlargement and self-realization afforded us through the reading of good books.

What you want to do, dear young friend, is to learn to love the great classics. What you want to do is to learn to read intelligently, to get the reading habit, and having got it, to nurture it systematically all your life long. Your teachers and parents and friends will help you to find what will interest and benefit you most in your reading at the various stages of your progress. Your close study of a few of the great masterpieces will enable you to discover others on your own initiative; and you will soon become a lover of books, a lover of humanity and of life as it is revealed through books, in all of its wonderful variety and richness.

What are you going to do? What are you going to be? There are a thousand answers to these questions. But let this be the motto of every ambitious boy and girl: *Whatever I shall be and whatever I shall do, I shall always be a lover and reader of good literature.* If you want to make money, go into the busy world and make it; but be sure that in the meantime you do not neglect to read good literature. What are you going to do with money when you make it? How are you going to spend your leisure when you win it? Can you spend either the money or the leisure wisely unless you have an enlarged capacity for living? And can you gain the enlarged capacity for living in any other, in any better way than by learning to read good books? The man who

knows not the companionship of books is almost surely doomed at some period of his life to become lonely and wretched. We are taught that there is no higher human ideal than that of good works, service to our fellows; but let us remember always that good works follow naturally from the impulses and ideals implanted in our natures by good literature. Who can estimate the influence of the best of all books, the Bible, the greatest collection of literary masterpieces ever gathered together in a single volume?

So do not imagine that you have actually completed English literature when you have merely read its history and studied a book of selections. Do not be so thoughtless as to suppose that when you have completed your high-school course and taken your examination on it, you will put literature behind you as a thing finished and done with. You must read, read all your life long, or else you will decay and dry up like a dead leaf on a stalk. Your mental life will stagnate, and you will live only a half-life. Literature is not like a child's disease which you catch once and suffer from for a few weeks or months and then become immune from for the rest of your life. The love of literature is not a disease; it is an acquisition, an endowment, an accomplishment; and when you have once become fully possessed of it, when you are once well inoculated with its fascinating influence, you will never want to escape from it or lose, even for ever so short a time, its marvelous and delightful effects on your life and character.

And finally do not look upon the study of literature as a burdensome task. Even the first steps in literary appreciation can be made delightful. It is an adventure, a game, a fascinating exercise, invoking and involving the best that is in you of mind and heart and soul. You will soon find yourself enjoying the thrill of excitement, the exquisite joy of imaginative flights, the passionate outbursts of noble emotions, the elusive charm of romantic idealism, the delicious quiverings of the finer spiritual impulses of your nature. Literature will become the source of your pleasure, your delight, your finer soul life. Beauty in all its physical,

moral, and spiritual attributes will take possession of your being, and you will ere long be ecstatically exclaiming with Keats, "a joy forever!"

This is the end and aim of your study of literature.

THE S. O. S. CLUB

M. MOSS RICHARDSON, M.A., INSTRUCTOR IN ENGLISH,
THE WEST TEXAS STATE NORMAL COLLEGE

In a certain college there has existed for a long time an English club. Very properly this club carries a scholarship requirement for entrance, no student being admitted whose grade in English is below *B*. The course of study is prescribed for a year at the time on such topics as *The American Short Story* or *The Modern Drama*; the program is carefully worked out and posted two weeks in advance of each meeting. The meetings, though meagerly attended, are profitable to the members, who are prone to receive satisfaction partly because their membership places them above the common herd.

But also in this college are the submerged tenth, which every teacher knows, those whose highest aspirations, so far as grades are concerned, are represented by a small *C*, who are modestly content even with a *D*. Perhaps through the modern falling off in the study of Latin, now happily arrested; perhaps through the lowering of standard of the teaching force during the war; perhaps through the attention of the American people to mass rather than to detail, this latter class is appallingly large. To an instructor who loves English, this class of students is as appealing as the size of it is appalling.

The *S. O. S. Club* came into being in response to the need of this group of students. The membership, unlimited as to number, was composed of freshman and sophomore college students. The student had to meet two conditions to be eligible: he must be weak in English, and he must know his weakness. Unless a student were discouraged by his weakness, he would, presumably, be unwilling to work. The club, familiarly called *the gang*, met from eight to nine o'clock every Monday morning. It was absolutely a secret club, no one save the members, the leader, and the head of



the department knowing anything about it. Even the meaning of the name was secret, but any teacher desiring to duplicate the club can interpret the letters to suit himself.

The programs were uniform: roll-call answered by correct use of some specific baffling grammatical form, a short business meeting, fifteen minutes' talk by the leader, three numbers by members, and a query box. The leader gave lessons on diagramming, with the club at the blackboard; lessons on analysis, or on case, with blanks to be filled with pronouns; drill on tongue twisters for the improvement of enunciation; or a talk on the forms of verbs, illustrated by blanks to be filled. In every case the leader's talk was supplemented by work actually performed by the club.

One of the members said helplessly, "Just copying from the blackboard or hearing the teacher talk don't help me any. I've got to do it with my own hands."

"Doesn't," corrected the leader automatically. "Repeat the sentence." And with no one to embarrass him, the young man repeated the sentence correctly.

Through the query-box the members themselves assigned the subjects they would like to hear discussed: *The Use of the Comparative, Mistakes I Have Heard This Week, A Study of the Possessive Case, How to Use "Lie" and "Lay" Correctly, What Is a Split Infinitive?* The youth who handled the last subject prefaced his discussion with the statement: "I always thought the split infinitive was some great thing that a person would have to learn pages and pages to avoid. Positively all I could get about it was shorter than a page." The teacher gasped, for she had told the class exactly what it was, but it made all the difference in the world who did the telling.

After the programs had been presented and the blanks filled at the meeting, type-written slips of additional blanks to be filled, sentences to be diagrammed, or tongue-twisters to be practiced were placed in a certain drawer in the English office, accessible to any member who should desire further drill.

Fun entered into the S. O. S. Club's program. They

laughed over jokes based on a play on words; or they poked fun at our very barbarous English spelling. And in their laughing, they forgot that English is a matter to be wept over and feared.

After a unanimous vote to continue the club with the next session, the club closed its first year with a party wherein the entertainment, planned by one of the members, partook of the nature of English with its fangs removed. One game consisted of filling the following blanks on separate cards: "What should you do if.....?" "I should....."

The teacher is still laughing over the two comical results of one of the misfit answers: "What should you do if you found yourself in a den of rattlesnakes?" "I should grab what was dearest to me."

The results of the efforts of the club were threefold: A few students passed who would otherwise have failed in English; the deadly fear of English was removed from others; and all the group found social companionship and identity of interest. A young teacher in another department of the college, a man whose English caused him frequent embarrassment, entered freely into the discussion to his extreme profit.

There is no patent on the S. O. S. Club. Any teacher who desires to create one is welcome to try the experiment.



FOLK-LORE IN TEXAS AND THE TEXAS FOLK-LORE SOCIETY*

BY J. FRANK DOBIE, M.A., INSTRUCTOR IN ENGLISH,
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

What is folk-lore? The question is often asked by folklorists and those uninitiated to folk-lore alike. Folk-lore always, more than government sometimes, is of, by, and for the people. One authority has defined it as: "That body of tradition which is handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. It includes the myths, legends, popular beliefs, folk-songs, and folk-tales of all the countries." But more than any abstract definition, a recital of the titles of papers that have been presented before the Texas Folk-Lore Society during its eight annual sessions, will make concrete the meaning of folk-lore.

Concerning Texas and the Southwest, papers have been presented on: "Cowboy Songs and Ballads," "Folk-Lore in Cattle Brands," "Wild Horse Stories in Southwest Texas," "Weather Wisdom of the Texas-Mexican Border," "Old Customs on the Rio Grande Border," "A Batch of Mexican Border Ballads," "Ballad Making on the Mexican Border," "Some Local Legends of Texas," "Texas Play Party Games and Songs," "Some East Texas Play Party Songs," "A Ballad of the Missionary Period."

Certain folk groups of Texas have been dealt with under the following titles: "Folk-Lore in Old Mammy's Tales," "Negro Ballads and Reels," "Old Sis Goose, a Negro Tale," "Negro Plantation Songs," "Negro Folk-Tales from the Brazos Bottoms," "The Ballad of the Boll Weevil," "Some Hobo Ballads," "Customs Among the German Descendants

*I wish to acknowledge indebtedness to Dr. Robert Adger Law and to Mr. John A. Lomax, from whose articles on the "History of the Folk-Lore Society of Texas" and "Unexplored Treasures of Texas Folk-Lore," respectively, published in the 1916 publications of the Texas Folk-Lore Society, I have drawn some material.

of Gillespie County, Texas," "Early German Architecture of Gillespie County" (Illustrated), "German Folk-Lore in Texas," "Indian Picture Drawings of the Big Bend District of Texas" (Illustrated), "Some Choctaw Legends," "Pre-historic Indian Remains in Texas," "Stories of the Choctaw Indians," "Traditions of the Waco Indians," "Among the Creek Indians a Decade Since," "Indian Customs," "Some Little Known Myths of the Moqui Pueblos," "Religious Beliefs and Customs of the Hasinai Indians."

Subjects unlocalized or geographically foreign to Texas have been represented as follows: "Superstitions Connected with the Owl," "Some Current Folk-Songs," "Stories of Irish Fairy and Folk-Lore," "Irish Life and Character," "Some Gaelic Folk-Tales," "Mediaeval Superstitions," "Stories of an African Prince," "South African Folk-Lore," "The Dying Lament," "Some American Versions of English and Scottish Ballads," "Brazilian Superstitions," "Japanese Folk-Tales," "European Tales Found Among the American Indians," "Folk-Lore in Appalachian Mountain Music," "Human Building Sacrifices in Balkan Ballads," "Ballad Making in Mexico," "Some Folk-Lore of Mexico," "German Fairy Tales," "Fairy Tales in Greek and Roman Literature," "Certain Legends of New England."

The linguistic side of folk-lore has been treated in four papers: "The Decline and Decadence of Folk-Metaphor," "Cowboy Lingo," "The Training-School Boys' Slang," "The Pronunciation of Some Huguenot Proper Names in South Carolina."

Papers critical or dealing with the science of folk-lore have included: "The Beginnings of Literature in Folk-Lore," "Preliminary Survey of Folk-Lore Interests in Texas," "Method of Study in Folk-Lore," "The Passing of the Folk," "Folk-Lore Fields of the Southwest," "Folk-Lore as a Factor in Determining Institutions," "Primitive Culture as Reflected in Fairy Tales," "How to Collect and Preserve Folk-Lore."

These titles, while illustrating the nature of folk-lore, illustrate also certain aspects of the folk-lore of our State



as they have presented themselves to members of the Texas Folk-Lore Society. But the soil of Texas folk-lore has been little more than scratched. No investigation of any phase of Texas folk-lore has been exhaustive, no interpretation final, no comparison extensive; and there are many phases of it that have not even been touched.

However, it would be a mistake to think that folk-lore can be found just anywhere; for as society becomes more sophisticated, it becomes more uniform, more dependent on professional services for its amusements, less credulous and even anxious to discard the "reeks" of the soil. So, like the old time cowman, or like the Confederate Veterans, folk-lore is, in a sense, passing away. Still, in districts where folk are indigenous and to an extent, in the academic sense, untutored, or where they yet preserve their folk identity undefiled, folk-lore more or less abundantly obtains. It abounds among the negroes of the Brazos bottoms and in other farm sections where the negro has not absorbed the white man's sophistication. It flourishes among the Mexicans along the Mexican border and far into the interior of the State. It survives among fishermen along the Gulf Coast, among the German settlements that have held together, more or less shutting out the intrusion of foreign blood, among Bohemian settlements in South and East Texas, among the original Irish settlements along the Nueces River—in fact, among all distinct groups of folk. A great deal of folk-lore lingers among ranching people who yet live on their ranches, and in the early farming settlements of the State. It is almost needless to say that the older generation is more folk-loristic than the younger.

As to the forms of folk material, the songs and ballads are probably of first importance. In gathering and publishing his *Cowboy Ballads*, Mr. John A. Lomax has no doubt performed a greater service to the cause of folk-lore than any other Texan who has worked in the realm of folk-lore; yet Mr. Lomax often says that there are many cowboy songs and ballads that he has been unable to get hold of. In 1912, the Texas Folk-Lore Society published a small pamphlet entitled *Some Current Folk-Songs of the Negro*,

by Professor W. H. Thomas, of the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College; yet Professor Thomas' collection is only a sample. A few, a very few, specimens of Mexican folk-songs have been presented to the Society. When we think of the hundreds of songs that the negroes sing in their fields and meetings; of the crude improvisations that remote cow-punchers yet sing in their camps; of the melodies that railroad construction gangs work by; of the curious old snatches that come back to some of us from pioneer parents, such as:

"I had a piece of pie, and I had a piece of pudding,
And I gave it all away to see Sally Goodwin,"

or

"Her mouth was like a hollow,
Her foot was like a ham,
Her eyes were like the owl's at night,
And her voice was never calm";

when we think of the Irish melodies that Irish mothers yet croon to their children down in the Nueces country; of the cantabile importations from Italy that Italian groups in Texas yet preserve; of the canorous sadness that has floated thither from below the Rio Grande; of the verses we have sometimes heard an old Confederate Veteran quaver,—when we think of these few instances of folk-songs and ballads, and of many more that might be enumerated, we realize that the harvest of such material by folk-lorists among us has hardly begun.

Next in importance to the songs and ballads are the legends perhaps. There is scarcely a county in the State without its legends. About place names, legends fairly cluster, such as the legend of Nocona, of Eagle Lake, of San (originally Sin) Caja Mountain in McMullen County, of Bear Mountain near Fredericksburg, of Corpus Christi, of Mount Bonnell. Judging from a few river legends already known to me, such as those of the Brazos, the San Bernard, and the San Marcos, I am sure that an extensive and highly interesting group of river legends might be assembled. Every section of the country almost has its "Lover's Leap"

or its "Enchanted Rock." There must be a score of "Dead Man's" hollows in the State, each with its tale. There are legends of queer characters, such as have grown up about Roy Bean, "Justice of the Peace and Law West of the Pecos"; there is the legend of the famous "White Pacing Stallion," of mustang days; there are legends of white deer (never killed) with madstones in their stomachs, of outlaw steers and man-killing horses, of cunning loboos and wily coyotes, of trees and flowers.

Of the legends of flowers, Mrs. J. A. Jackson of Austin has collected several and is seeking more. Mrs. W. W. Creswell of San Antonio is at work on the legendary and historic trees of Texas. Indian legends comprise such a large group that they would fill volumes in themselves; and it would take a volume to contain all the legends of buried treasure in Texas with their variants. During a few weeks this past summer, in a comparatively small area of Southwest Texas, the present writer collected something over thirty legends of buried treasure.

Early in 1924 the Texas Folk-Lore Society will publish a Legends Number of its publications. Already around seventy-five legends are in hand. But if this Legends Number is thoroughly representative, hundreds of legends from hundreds of sections of the State should be included.*

Closely allied to legends are ghost stories and fables. The negroes, of course, are more prolific in "hants" than any other people; but it is surprising how many animal fables are current in the more sophisticated strata of society. Nearly any popular stump orator will drive his point home with a homely fable of a mule, a horse, a frog, or some other animal. Such fables are passed around, become staple, and form a real class of folk-lore. Akin to them, are certain humorous yarns, often rude, that are told over

*Due credit is, of course, given to every contributor, and a request, a plea, is here sent forth for contributions to what should be the most interesting compilation of folk-lore, excepting the *Cowboy Songs*, ever made west of the Mississippi River.

and over. A collection of such yarns might be made in almost any community.

Superstitions, signs, omens, cures, peculiar customs, comprise a great body of folk-lore. As surely as it maintains any folk individuality, so surely does a community possess such folk-lore. It is the very stuff of "local color" stories. One way to study folk-lore is to study it in literature, and if recognized outside of literature, it is all the more pleasant to meet it therein. Shakespeare's plays, for instance, are full of it. Perhaps the best use that has ever been made of Texas folk-lore in fiction has been made by Mrs. M. E. M. Davis in her novels, *The Wire Cutters* and *Under the Man-Fig*. These novels, which deserve a far better remembrance than they have, afford a most excellent introduction to the peculiar customs and beliefs of the Texans and negroes whom a generation ago Mrs. Davis knew so well along the Brazos country (though the scene of *The Wire Cutters* is laid farther west). The old medicine men of the Mexicans in Texas are as truly makers of folk-lore in their practices as were the Indian medicine men. Mrs. E. Owen Scott, of Rio Grande City, is now working on Mexican "remedios"—or cures.

Captain John G. Bourke, U. S. A., at once scholar and humanist, in 1894 contributed to the *Journal of American Folk-Lore* a long article on the "Popular Medicine, Customs, and Superstitions of the Rio Grande." He collected his material while stationed along the Mexican border, and his study is the most thorough and scholarly ever made by a folk-lorist dealing exclusively with Texas folk-lore. It is a pity that this article, together with another that he wrote for the same publication on "Folk Foods of the Rio Grande Valley and Northern Mexico" (published in 1895), is to most Texans, inaccessible.

The games, plays, dances, and other amusements of a folk form a large body of their lore. In the 1916 Publications of the Texas Folk-Lore Society, Dr. L. W. Payne, Jr., of the University of Texas, and Mr. R. E. Dudley, of Abilene, brought together a large number of Texas play-party songs

together with explanations of the games to which they are sung. "The woods are full" of games that are handed down from generation to generation.

Dialect as a form of folk-lore appears in practically all occupational, religious, regional, and other divisions of society. Attention has been called to some of the studies of it made by members of the Texas Folk-Lore Society. The American Dialect Society, through the Texas Folk-Lore Society, is anxious to secure lists of words that are local, as it is compiling a dictionary of American slang, dialect words, and other special vocabularies. Folk metaphor is the most picturesque of all forms of language, the strongest, and it is a pity that it is passing.

"The old cow crossed the road because she crossed the road," and all we know about her crossing the road is that her crossing has added to one of the most engaging of the fields of folk-lore—that of the sayings, rhymes, jokes, riddles, proverbs of the people. Not to know "A from Adam's off ox" is to "been't wholly stalwart in uns brains"; but to dance all night "from who laid the chunk," and then in the morning to bound out of bed at the paternal cry of:

"Wake up, Jacob,
Day's a-breaking,
Peas in the pot,
And hoe cakes a-baking,"

is to grow up on folk-lore. Compilations of the homely sayings of the West, such as "The boss's eyes make a fat horse," or of our darkey sages, such as "A goose without a leader, he wanders up and down," would prove the most interesting reading.

Of course, *Uncle Remus* is the American classic of animal lore, but Joel Chandler Harris did not exhaust the subject among the negroes. The coyote was the subject of countless beliefs and stories among the Indians, and is yet among the Mexicans. Any group of old time Texans can furnish rattlesnake yarns that border on folk-lore. Any people

who live near to animals develop an animal lore, as is illustrated by the old belief that a buck's age may be reckoned by the number of points to his antlers, or that a king-snake can kill a tree by stinging it, or that owls know when it is going to rain.

The last-mentioned bit of animal lore is also an illustration of weather lore, and it is surprising how many weather signs, sayings, and rhymes there are. Astrology and ancient mythology dovetail into this category.

Finally, plant lore may be mentioned. Miss Ellen D. Schulz of San Antonio, who recently issued a very valuable book entitled *Five Hundred Flowers of San Antonio and Vicinity*, is now gathering the lore that lies about plant life in Texas. Here and there may be found ancient and prophet-like characters who can "rightly spell" of "every herb that sips the dew"; no lore is quite so absorbing as that which an old woman or an old man can tell of "herbs." The romances of the middle ages turn on such lore, and the doctors of the twentieth century ride in their automobiles on it.

This examination of the fields of folk-lore is by no means exhaustive, and it can readily be seen that one field frequently overlaps another. If heaven lies about us in our infancy, folk-lore lies about us all the rest of our lives—and with some of us probably about our life after death! An educated man (to essay another definition of the subject) is a man who can view with interest and intelligence the phenomena of life about him. To come to recognize folk-lore with interest and intelligence, whether one gathers it or not, is to arrive at another interest in life, to realize just by so much a fuller life. Was not Robert Louis Stevenson's whole message a spur to being alive to the things about us?

A word may be said here about the English teacher's peculiar relation to folk-lore. We all know that nothing is quite so stimulating to a pupil as the realization that the things that he has been familiar with all his life have a value. The key to teaching and learning alike is the law of

association. The successful English teacher is a "liaison officer" between the world of familiar experience and the new world recorded in textbooks. I have been astounded at how much more interest a class in Sophomore English will take in the Scotch Border Ballads when they are made to see the relationship between these Scotch Border Ballads and one of their own Texas border cowboy ballads. I have felt the leap of interest produced in the same class upon their realizing the relationship between the folk-lore of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and the folk-lore that exists on every farm and ranch and in every village of Texas. If *Treasure Island* needed anything to make Texas high-school boys seize upon it with avidity, surely a re-counting to them of one of the buried treasure legends of Jean Lafitte on Galveston Island would supply the need. The natural process of the mind is to go from the known to the unknown—from the lore of the folk to the classics of the learned. Sir Walter Scott got the material for his lays and romances from the folk of the soil; and one way to get Sir Walter Scott is to begin where he began. Folk-lore is intrinsically interesting, but it is no more "a thing apart" than is English literature or English composition.

Introducing a class in theme writing to folk-lore and then asking for papers on the subject, is sure to meet with success. To intrude personal experience again, some of the best essays I have ever received from English students have been on "College Slang," "High school Diction," "Community Games and Songs," "Superstitions and Beliefs of My Community," "A Legend," and other such topics. At the same time, while aiding his students in observation and expression, the teacher who chooses has an opportunity to do some folk-lore collecting.

No discussion of folk-lore in Texas would be complete without a sketch of the Texas Folk-Lore Society. This society was organized during the annual meeting of the Texas State Teachers' Association in Dallas, December 29, 1909. The men responsible for its organization—and their efforts and interest have largely kept it alive ever since—were

Mr. John A. Lomax, then of the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College, now Secretary of the Ex-Students' Association of the University of Texas, and Professor L. W. Payne, Jr., University of Texas. The charter members numbered sixty-six.

The first annual meeting was held in Austin in April, 1911. Then followed six more meetings, four of them at Austin, one at Waco, and one at San Marcos. At all of these meetings papers on folk-lore were read, frequently special singers were procured to sing folk-songs of various nationalities, and once a pageant of folk-costuming was presented. During the seven years of regular meetings, the society has been addressed at different times by Professor Bliss Perry of Harvard University, Professor George Lyman Kittredge of Harvard University, Mr. Seumas Macmanus, noted Irish folk-lorist, and Professor Barrett Wendell of Harvard University.

In 1916, under the able editorship of Dr. Stith Thompson, then of the University of Texas, the society issued Number I of its publications. The volume was well received and gave the society considerable notice abroad. Then next year, with the entrance of the United States into the World War, the activities of the society were disrupted, and the society itself sank into a state of coma.

In the spring of the present year, however, the Texas Folk-Lore Society was revived. On April 20 last one of the best meetings ever held was held in Austin. Early in 1923 the society will issue the second number of its publications, which will contain most of the papers that were read at the meeting in April and also several articles specially written for the issue. In 1924, as has been said, the society will issue a volume of Texas Legends. The ninth annual meeting will be held next April, probably in Austin. The number of people actively interested in folk-lore over the State is continually increasing. Since last April about sixty new members have been added to the roll.

Presidents of the society in order have been: Dr. L. W. Payne, Jr., University of Texas; Mr. Theodore G. Lemmon,



Dallas; Dr. Robert Adger Law, University of Texas; Professor W. H. Thomas, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College; Miss Dorothy Scarborough, Baylor University; Dr. Clyde Chew Glascock, Rice Institute; Mrs. Lillie T. Shaver, Southwest Texas State Normal College, San Marcos; Dr. Clyde Chew Glascock, Rice Institute; Professor W. H. Thomas, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Secretaries have been: Mr. John A. Lomax (four terms); Mr. W. P. Webb, then of Beeville, now of the University of Texas; Dr. Stith Thompson, now of the University of Indiana; the writer of this article.

THE TEACHING OF AMERICAN LITERATURE IN TEXAS

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In the catalogues of the various schools over the State, bulletins from the State Department of Education, State laws governing public free schools, and comments and discussions in the educational journals, there is available an abundance of material bearing on the history of the teaching of American Literature in the schools of Texas. Unless otherwise indicated, the material here collected is based on these sources.

The present systems of public schools in the cities and towns of Texas are now about forty years old. A few of the city systems, following the leadership of Brenham, were established during the seventies; but most of our Texas towns trace their systems of public schools back to the early eighties. Before 1880 only the very slightest attention was given to the study of English Literature, and much less to the newer field of American Literature. The Official Bulletin of the State Department of Education for 1873 makes the following announcement: "The following named books were adopted by the Board of Education of the State of Texas, under the school act of April 27, 1871"*; and among the textbooks named are Watson's *Independent Readers* for the first to the sixth grades, inclusive. It would be interesting indeed to examine some of these Watson's *Independent Readers*, but since they are not available, it may not be very wrong to assume that they contained selections not very different from the McGuffey, Holmes, Appleton, or National readers, which were widely used in the United States at the time. An investigation shows that the average proportion of American writings in these readers was slightly more than one-third of each book; that

*Bulletin of the State Department of Education for 1873, p. 16.



the proportion of selections from American authors of literary repute was about one-fifth of each book.

Of course there were private and denominational schools and colleges in Texas many years before 1880. There were courses of study in Rutgersville College, Soule University, Wesleyan College, and Bastrop Military Institute during years scattered through the 1840's, '50's, and '60's. Some of these courses of study included a department of "Mental Philosophy and Belles Lettres" or "Moral Philosophy and English literature." But even the so-called English literature was strangely named, for there was no mention of the literary classics or the history of literature—only a queer assortment of courses in logic, ethics, theology, rhetoric, astronomy, or history, in which such textbooks as Hopkins's *Law of Love and Love As Law*, or Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*, or Quackenbos's *Rhetoric*, or Story's *Constitution of the United States*, or Upham's *Mental Philosophy* were used. And if there was no teaching of Shakespeare, Milton, and Bunyan, certainly the teaching of American authors was unthought of. The day of American literature in the schools of Texas was not yet.

During the decade of the 1880's, there was no uniformity in the course of study used by the school systems over Texas. Since 1871 there had been no act of the State Department of Education prescribing a definite course of study or textbooks. Each town was free to shape its own course. This freedom was exercised, for instance, in the choice of graded readers for the elementary schools. The McGuffey readers were more widely used than any others; the Appleton readers were nearly as popular; later in the decade the Swinton readers came into use. Aside from the readers, it seems that no attention was paid to literature in the elementary grades; at least there was no supplementary reading by teacher or by pupils which was considered of sufficient importance to be mentioned in the catalogues describing the courses of study. This lack was not because school editions of literary classics were not available. The inexpensive paper-backed/ Riverside Literature Series began to

appear in 1882 and soon had a wide circulation; but they were not used in the public schools of Texas until after 1890. Nor is there evidence that the schools were furnished yet with library facilities worth mentioning. In 1889 the Brenham catalogue urged the patrons of the schools to strive to give the children of Brenham a better school library.

As to the high schools in the 1880's, the following towns offered a regular course: Brenham, Galveston, Austin, El Paso, Dallas, Corsicana, Belton, Blanco, Fort Worth, Terrell, Houston, Denison, San Antonio, Sherman, Weatherford, Waco, Marshall, and probably a few others.* Of these high schools, not one in the whole decade of the '80's announced the teaching of a course in American literature, with one exception—Corsicana. At Corsicana the senior class in 1884-85 spent the first term in a study of Underwood's *American Authors with Biographical Sketches*, the second term in a study of *British Authors*. Some of the high schools—Brenham, for instance—were still using McGuffey's *High School Reader*; but most of them were using instead a textbook in English literature, such as Shaw's or Kellogg's or Swinton's. There was a very limited amount of supplementary reading of English (not American) classics. In the closing years of the decade, however, the preparatory departments of the Texas colleges were beginning to give attention to American authors. In 1887-88 the preparatory department of Southwestern University offered a term in American prose and American poetry. It is interesting to observe that during this very time when the high schools were doing nothing in American literature, the entrance examinations in English at the University of Texas required a knowledge of four or five selections, one of which was usually American. The material and textbooks, such as the book called *Masterpieces of American Literature*, were ready for use in the secondary schools, but were not adopted, except in the one or two isolated cases mentioned.

If the elementary and secondary schools of the State were ignoring the teaching of American literature, it is not sur-

*Eby, Frederick, *Education in Texas*, p. 851.

prising that the colleges were doing likewise. During the whole decade there was no separate course in American literature offered by Southwestern, Howard Payne, Austin College, A. and M., Trinity, or the University of Texas. But again there is one interesting exception. Baylor University in 1882 offered a separate and distinct course in American literature in the second term of the senior year. The other colleges mentioned had progressed beyond the "Belles Lettres" stage, for they were now teaching rhetoric, philology, and English literature instead of moral philosophy, astronomy, and the like. Towards the end of the decade an occasional mention was made of an American author among a number of authors for class study or for supplementary reading. But in the matter of adopting a course in American literature as such, Baylor University led the colleges of Texas. It may be mentioned in passing that the Texas colleges, and those of the South generally, were in this movement lagging behind those of other sections of the country by some ten or twenty years. The colleges of the Middle West had been pioneers in the movement.

Though the high schools and colleges of Texas were asleep to the possibilities and benefits of giving attention to their own native literature, the agitation was beginning which was presently to awaken them. The stimulus seemed to come from without the State. In July, 1888, Horace E. Scudder made an address before the National Educational Association at San Francisco, on "Literature in the Common Schools."* In the same year Scudder published in the *Atlantic Monthly* an article on "American Classics in Schools,"† in which he pleaded for a more extensive and a more whole-hearted study of American literature in the common schools. Both of these articles were quoted and commented on in the *Texas School Journal* for August, 1888.

Scudder's sentiments found sympathetic support in Texas. W. L. Lemmon addressed the Texas State Teachers' Associa-

**Texas School Journal*, VI, p. 210.

†*Ibid.*, VI, pp. 274-77.

tion in the fall of 1888 on the subject of "American Literature in the High School."* He closed his statement with the following paragraph:

"It was the old-fashioned method to put the literature into the hands of students.... In preparing pupils to learn about literature, have them read books, beginning with the easier ones."

The same year Miss Mildred Fairfield, a teacher in Houston, contributed an article to the *Texas Education* on the subject of "American Literature in the High School." She advocated a larger use of American literature in Texas schools.†

In the elementary grades during the 1890's, such as McGuffey's, were beginning to be used as supplementary material. The reading of books besides the graded readers was first adopted in the schools in the seventh and eighth grades; in the ninth grade read Webster's *Bunker Hill Address*, then a book called *Seven American Classics*. The list of books had increased. The seventh grade read Dickens's *Carol* and Longfellow's *Evangeline*. The eighth grade read Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales*, Macaulay's *Ancient Rome*, and Webster's *Orations*. By the end of the course of reading in the elementary grades at the time had become almost elaborate. As outlined for all the grades, the course contained American stories. Other towns were forming similar courses. Dallas, Austin, and Galveston gave as full a course as Corsicana, but they included some English books. In 1896-97 the book called *Masterpieces of American Literature* was used in the seventh grade at Cambridge. In 1899 came the first real "Official Course of Elementary Schools" of Texas, announced by the Department of Education. It gave for each grade a list of supplementary reading, largely composed of American books.

*Minutes of the *Texas State Teachers' Association*.

†*Texas School Journal*, VI, pp. 202-204.

In the 1890's all of the high schools and college-preparatory schools whose catalogues were consulted were teaching American literature. There was no uniformity among the schools in method of teaching, the textbooks used, or the year preferred for the course. Dallas showed the usual changeableness in the matter. In 1895 Dallas was using a history of American literature in the second year of the high-school course. In 1897 this text was dropped and the books substituted had nothing to do with American literature. In 1898 American literature was taught in the first term of the senior year, "with special reference to Southern writers," the textbooks "to be selected." In 1899 the only American literature taught was collateral reading of the first year, in connection with a whole year of rhetoric.

By 1900 American literature had received recognition in nearly all of the Texas colleges. And Baylor, as early as 1894-95, had announced that "manuals and histories of literature" should be done away with in the senior course, and only "*literature itself*" should be studied.

Austin College in 1891 spent the junior year in a study of English and American literature. The catalogue of that same year shows that the freshman English course mentioned the study of several American authors, among whom were Irving and Longfellow. Indeed, most of the colleges had been teaching American authors in this incidental way for several years before a real course in American literature was given.

Howard Payne College in 1892 named as one of the seven textbooks for the junior year a volume of specimens of American literature. There was, however, a lapse of ten or fifteen years during which no attention at all was paid to the subject at Howard Payne. And it was not until 1909 that this college announced its first separate course in American literature.

Trinity University in 1895-96 announced an elective course for upperclassmen, the course described thus: "American Literature—our leading poets, essayists, and novelists." This was offered for a number of years.

At Southwestern University in 1891-92 the freshman reading-list included nine authors, among them being Irving, Cooper, and Hawthorne. In 1896 this requirement had been transferred to the second term of the sophomore year. In 1897 this college offered its first distinct course in American literature, a course in American poetry, to be given the second term of the senior year. In 1898-99 there was announced a course called "Outline of American Literature."

In the case of A. and M. College, for nearly twenty years after the founding of the college, the department of English and the department of history were combined. By 1900 the two had become distinct. The department of English still ignored the teaching of American literature. But the department of history announced as its freshman course a study of "The History of American Literature."

The University of Texas in the winter term of 1900 offered a course in "Literature of the South," a one-third course, especially for advanced students. This course was repeated in the following session.

There were other developments of the 1890's which are worthy of consideration. In 1893 the Twenty-third Legislature of the State of Texas passed a law for permanent certification of teachers. Applicants for the permanent certificate were required to pass examination in some more advanced subjects than were necessary for first, second, or third grade certificates; among these additional subjects was American literature.

To turn again to the educational magazines of the State, one finds the growing interest in American literature reflected in the much larger publicity given the subject during the nineties than during the preceding decade.

There had been organized through the columns of the *Texas School Journal* a society known as the Texas Teachers' Reading Circle, whose annual course of study was published and commented upon in the *Journal* from time to time. In 1894 the Reading Circle declared themselves as follows:

"The chief glory of every nation arises from its authors. American literature has a wealth of material. Let us study



this literature that we may lead the children to a proper appreciation of the best which our American authors have left us.”*

In 1895 the seventeenth annual meeting of the Texas Teachers' Association, held at Dallas, was the scene of a long address by Superintendent T. S. Minter on the subject, "Southern Literature—Why It Should Be Taught in the Intermediate Grades."† Mr. Minter's chief points were that the South is misrepresented in many textbooks, that the South is rich in writings of great literary and moral value, and that instruction in the high school comes too late to reach the masses of school children.

In 1898 the Texas State Teachers' Association listened to an address by Miss Mary Martin on "Literature in the Intermediate Schools"‡ and an address by Mr. P. W. McFadden on "Literature in the Elementary Schools."§ Miss Martin urged the teaching of the current literature of our country, and by inspirational methods rather than by mechanical drill. Mr. McFadden pleaded for the teaching of American literature in the elementary grades.

The supplementary reading done by the elementary grades had been developed extensively by the first decade of the present century. For example, the Waxahachie course of study for 1907 contained the following announcement: "The four grades of the Primary Department will study something of the lives and works of the following authors, with suitable selections from their writings: Eugene Field, James Whitcomb Riley, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, William Cullen Bryant, Joel Chandler Harris, Louisa May Alcott, Father Ryan, Oliver Wendell Holmes. Special attention may be given to the author's birthday by prepared programs."

**Texas School Journal* for 1894, p. 394.

†*Texas School Journal* for 1895, pp. 305-308.

‡Minutes of the Texas State Teachers' Association for 1898, pp. 139-141.

§*Ibid.*, pp. 142-146.

The reading assigned to the intermediate grades in Cameron during the years 1902-1906 may be considered typical of many Texas schools of the time. It included Hawthorne's *Wonder Book* and Whittier's *Child Life in Prose* for the fourth grade; *Hiawatha* and *The Deerslayer* for the fifth grade; *Texas Under Six Flags*, Burroughs's *Birds and Bees*, Irving's *Sketch-Book*, and *The Courtship of Miles Standish* for the sixth grade; and *Masterpieces of American Literature* and Hawthorne's *Moses from an Old Manse* for the seventh grade.

The State course of study for 1906 and 1908 recommended a large amount of supplementary literature for each grade, with certain well-known poems for each year, many of them American selections, to be committed to memory.

It is evident that by 1905 American literature had come into its own in the common schools of Texas. To what extent the reading was enjoyed by the children may be observed from a study made by Mr. L. H. Hubbard of Belton in 1905, an investigation into the literary tastes of 1353 school children of Texas.* In the list of favorite books, beloved and appreciated by hundreds of Texas children, the selections from American literature occupied a prominent place.

Passing to the high-school curricula during the years 1900 to 1910, one finds that the teaching of American literature had become definite enough to afford by this time a systematic comparison of specific details of study. First, there is the matter of the textbooks used. There was no State-adopted text; hence the schools showed a wide variation of choice. Five schools used a volume of masterpieces of American literature in addition to the text on the history of the literature. All the schools used American classics for class study and home reading, not only in connection with American literature courses but also in other years of the high-school course, particularly in the first two years.

**Texas School Journal*, XXIII, pp. 6-10.



other matter of interest in the high-school work is the preferred for an intensive study of American authors. Of the course of study in English recommended by the committee of teachers appointed by the State Teachers' Association was as follows:—first year: grammar, composition, classics; second year: rhetoric, composition, and classics; third year: rhetoric, composition, and classics; fourth year: history of English and American literature, classics, themes. But this was not the course followed by the majority of Texas high schools. In fifty-odd schools, third year of high school was preferred for the course in American literature by thirty-seven schools; the fourth year by nine schools; the second year by seven schools; the first year by two schools. Three schools offered no definite course.

With regard to the method of teaching in the high school it seems a pity that most of the schools were still following a weekly hodge-podge of the English recitations, such as this: American literature, two periods each week; composition, one period; classics, two periods—throughout the latter half of the third year. Another scheme was to have a recitation in American literature one period a week throughout the whole year, alternating with two periods a week in rhetoric and two periods in reading some English or American classic. Imagine the folly of expecting a healthy mind to find rest in reading a few chapters from *Marnier*, putting it aside till the next week, plodding through two lessons on the technique of letter-writing; putting that aside half-learned, turning to a lesson on the life of Oliver Wendell Holmes, putting that out of mind immediately to return in apathetic bewilderment to *Silas Marner*. This procedure was recommended by the course of study in most schools fifteen years ago, and it is followed by many schools to this day.

Turning to the curricula of the colleges and universities in the state one finds that the progress made in attention to American literature had been slight. Trinity University and Baylor M. College had dropped the course in American lit-

erature. Austin College, Baylor, Howard Payne, western, and the University of Texas were still offering one course or fraction of a course. One or two colleges were offering courses in the novel or the short story which may have included American authors, but the teaching of American literature had not advanced with the rapidity as the teaching of English literature.

It may be well to trace briefly the development of the subject in the curricula of the State normals, taking the Houston Normal as representative; for the course in all the normals was the same. Sam Houston, founded in 1879, was the first State normal school in Texas. In 1879 there was no mention in its curriculum of American literature, though there was instruction in English literature in "ancient literature." In 1893 the State law was passed requiring American literature as one of the subjects for the permanent teacher's certificate. Immediately the Houston course of study announced in its senior course in English and American literature, but the course announced was a history of English literature. In 1893 in "ancient literature" had been dropped, the course in English literature developed, but the course in American literature seemed to remain only a name in the catalogue. It was not until 1909-10 that a separate course in American literature was announced. It was an elective course in the first year, and continued as such for several years.

Coming to the situation with respect to American literature in the schools of Texas, at the present time we refer to the "Manual and Course of Study for the Primary Schools of Texas," published in 1921 by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In the State-adopted course, according to that bulletin, at least one-half of the reading material is of American authorship. The bulletin gives at the end of the reading course a list of "Books Every Child Should Read," classified for each grade from one through seven. About half of the books on the list are of American authorship.

In the high schools the second decade of the present century was remarkable for a few real changes in the



of American literature. Notable among these was a growing sentiment in favor of readings from literature with only slight biographical material, if any at all. Most of the Texas high schools, have abolished the old scheme, moreover, of dividing each week into two lessons of this, two of that, and one of something else, for a consecutive, coherent, and unified course of at last half a year in the given subject.

It is pleasant to be able to add in concluding this account, that in our colleges there has been a steady increase in recent years in the number and in the variety of courses given in American literature.



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The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.

Sam Houston

Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy. . . . It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge and the only security that freemen desire.

Mirabeau B. Lamar



The English Bulletin

Number 11

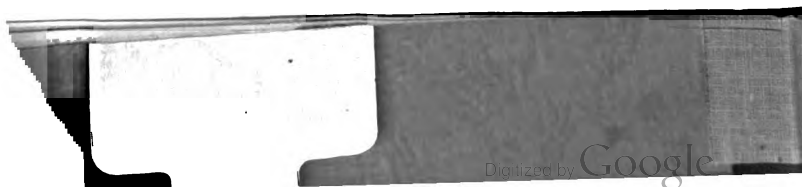
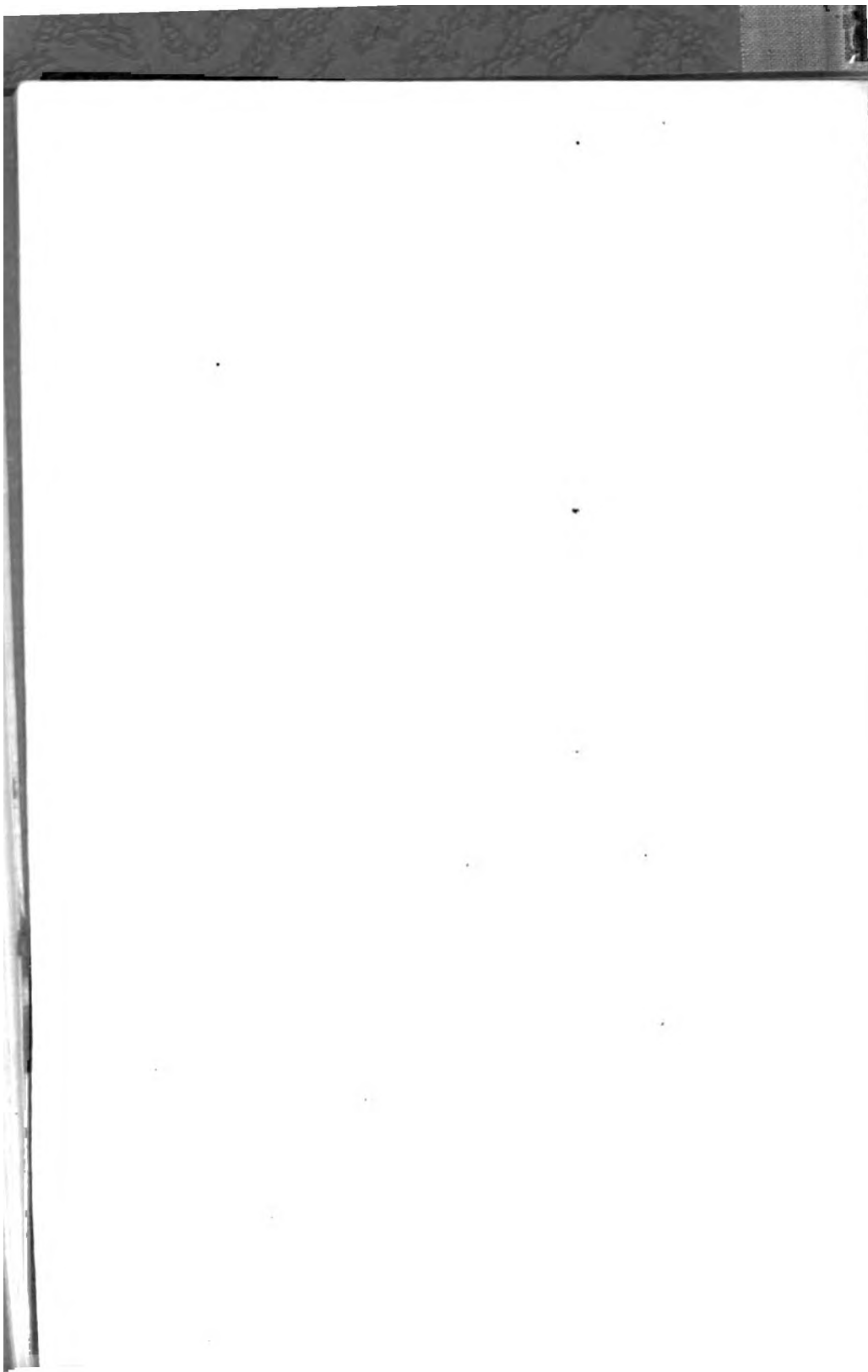
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AMERICAN LITERATURE IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

A Consideration of Present Tendencies and Needs in the Light of the
Development of the High School and the Evolution of American
Literature as a Subject in High-School Curriculum*

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One wonders, if one stops to think of it, whether there is a more universal or a more potent influence in perpetuating human experience and human ideals than the persistent custom, among all peoples, of "observing days"—of commemorating significant events in a people's history. Birthdays, anniversary days in the life of an individual or a nation, stimulate the individual or the group to further achievements whose worth is to be measured by the extent to which such an individual or group keeps a proper balance between the lessons of the past and the tasks of the future. It was this commemorative impulse that made the year just past, the tercentenary of the great Folio of 1623, of such importance in re-evaluating Shakespeare. It was partly this impulse which has recently stimulated a reconsideration of Whitman's place in American letters. It is this impulse which often stimulates leaders of education to take stock of the past and to attempt to order the future by the lessons which the past affords.

Just so the present decade, to the teacher of American literature in the high school, furnishes an excellent opportunity to pause for reflection, for it marks the centennial of both our first significant and distinctively American literature, and our first free public high school, which is distinctively an American institution. This statement is not made in disparagement of the high place which such a man as Franklin holds in our national life, nor is it meant to decry the services of the more exotic Latin Grammar Schools

*Paper read before the English Section of the Texas State Teachers' Association at Fort Worth, November 30, 1923.

of Colonial and Revolutionary days, or of the academies which flourished from the Revolution to the Civil War. Indeed, it is well known that these two types of schools were largely the stock upon which the modern high school was grafted. But it requires only the mention of a few significant dates to remind us of the relative importance of the 1820's in the development of both our literature and our high school. Certain facts related to this simultaneous origin and development are vitally significant, I believe, in trying to decide now, or at any other time, what place really should be given American literature in the high school.

In contemplating the beginnings of our national literature which was of sufficient merit to take a place among the contemporary literatures, one recalls several landmarks of the 1820's. In the first place, Irving's *Sketch Book* missed the beginning of the decade by only a year. Within the decade, among his other works, appeared *Tales of a Traveler*, *Columbus*, and the *Conquest of Granada*. Within the same decade appeared Bryant's first volume of poems and Cooper's *The Spy*, *The Pioneers*, *The Pilot*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Prairie*, and *Red Rover*. Within this decade Emerson was graduated from Harvard, and emancipated, along with a few other New Englanders, from Calvinistic Puritanism. Within this decade appeared the maiden literary efforts of Hawthorne and Longfellow, and the puerile verse which caused William Lloyd Garrison to seek out the future author of *Snow-Bound* and New England's greatest abolitionist. And within this decade appeared two editions of the poems of Edgar Allan Poe, without whose service to poetry, criticism, and fiction America's pride in her national literary achievement would materially suffer.

As for the beginnings of the high school in America, it is well known that the decade under consideration saw our first two public free high schools, both of which were established in Boston: one for boys in 1821, and a similar one for girls in 1826. It was in this latter year, 1826, that the Massachusetts Legislature passed a law providing for the establishment of other public free high schools in the important towns of that state. It was in the next year, 1827,



legislature of the same state provided for making broadening the curriculum of the high school to meet the needs of the high-school graduate who might not be able to go to college. Thus in the decade of 1870-80 was launched our first state system of high

It would be interesting to follow here the rise of the high school and its struggles with the earlier Latin grammar schools and academies through the first half century of the high school's existence. But we must content ourselves on this point with only a notice of the fact that through this century (approximately 1825-1875), even though there was a pronounced struggle between the academy and the high school, two dominant notions about the function of secondary education persisted: (1) It must prepare for college and (2) it must prepare for life. Along with these notions went two others, no less persistent: (1) Universal education, an inalienable right, is necessary to the maintenance of a democracy; and (2), a corollary to this, a democracy should freely use its school system—and this system includes its curricula—to perpetuate the traditional ideals upon which the nation was founded. These dual notions fastened upon the American high school the stupendous task of preparing students for college for life as a citizen if the student was not able or did not want to go to college. The second notion has bequeathed to us an endless contention about the aim, the content, and the method of teaching literature in the high

Some very valuable works dealing with the development of the high school in America are E. E. Brown's *The Making of our Middle Class* (Longmans, Green & Co., 1914); J. E. Stout's *The Development of the High-School Curricula in the North Central States from 1860 to 1900* (University of Chicago Press, 1921); and A. J. Inglis's *The High School in Massachusetts* (Columbia University Press,

to the extent of course this question has affected elementary education. But by reason of the fact that the student is more concerned with literature in a formal way in the high school, the contention has been mostly in the latter type.

Now, literature, of course, more poignantly even history, gathers up ideals into memorable, beautiful, enjoyable forms. But it is not hard to see that the typically serious and didactic mind of the American people seized upon this fact, and has undoubtedly abused the name of both patriotism and religion; and yet it cannot successfully disputed, I think, that the American school has, blunderingly or otherwise, perpetuated the American genius, whether this genius was embodied in the autobiography of a great philanthropist, an address of a great general or statesman, a hymn of the Sage of Mount Vernon, a commemoration ode of a scholar and poet, or in the immortal lyric of a youth who dared rush from the halls of an American college across the Atlantic to "Rendezvous with Death" where Democracy was in a grapple with Autocracy.

But the literature of patriotism, we might well say, is only one great type, which always receives new emphasis when a country is concerned about its safety. Once the guns are now furled, the parade has passed, and the clamor of the machinery of war has ceased its ravages on land and sea, in the air. The hymns of hate and the pean of conflict have given way to the literature of peace. The greater literature in scope, if not in intensity, deals with other fundamental human experiences—love, nature, religion, humanity, moral life, the past, and inner impulses and ideals that may be caught up in the novel, the drama, the lyric, and the various other forms of literary expression. Does our literature which finds its inspiration, not in the din of battle nor in the contest of the cause of strife, have sufficient scope and challenge a re-evaluation, a new emphasis in our schools? To deny that it does is to forget such facts as that after the destruction of the Armada came the birth of Shakespeare's day.

And indeed there is scarcely anything more obvious than a widespread consciousness since the great World

³As is well known, the movement antedates America's entrance into the war by at least five years. But there is no doubt that it gave a greater impetus to it.



new era in our national literature is upon us. In contemporary literary activity certainly was never in this country, nor perhaps in England. We need here to pass judgment upon the quality of the output though we have some rather clear and positive conviction on this score, which will be expressed in the proper manner. But the witnesses of a renewed and popular interest in literature are indisputable. New poets throughout the land are turning out numberless volumes every year. Some poets are going throughout the length and breadth of the land singing their verse and lecturing about it. The press is groaning with quantities of verse which are being collected into volumes by the author, now appearing in periodicals, and now getting into anthologies everywhere. Literary clubs without number are promoting modern poetry, drama, and fiction. Societies are encouraging production by offering prizes for all types of literary work. Critics are applauding here and condemning there. A veritable renaissance is seen in the digging up of old journals, and fragments of older authors. There is a new enthusiasm in the literature of today. It is easy, of course, to see how this universal, quickened interest in literary activity is giving no little concern about the emphasis we should place upon the newer literature in the school. One needs only to look a little into current literary criticism to learn that the battle is raging around three points in particular: (1) Should not American literature, on a par with the older and larger literature of England, receive relatively greater attention in the public high school curriculum? (2) Is it not time for some shifting of emphasis from the greater mid-nineteenth century writers to some of the more outstanding figures in contemporary literature? and (3) Is it not time to include in the school curricula considerably more of our national literature written since the first great creative period? Teachers of English are well aware of the fact that for the last ten years or more, there has been much "throwing of brains" on all three of these questions. The battle

has raged in our professional journals, in the most important periodicals of the day, and in the books of criticism, which there is no end. The fight has been carried from the secondary schools, into the smaller colleges and universities, and even into the greater graduate institutions of the country; and there is no sign of a truce in sight.

In the meantime the curricula of high schools, colleges, and universities are including more and more modern and temporary literature, particularly more of contemporary poetry. The enthusiasm for such study is running high in the order of schools thus named. Recent examination of a considerable number of courses of study in the schools of the country reveals a very marked tendency to include a rapid survey of modern writers, particularly poets. Current catalogues of the junior and senior colleges of the country, both denominational and secular, reported, show that a majority of all types of colleges are including some kind of study of modern American literature, looking in the direction of a re-evaluation of traditional literature.

We may move up one step higher yet. Dr. Arthur S. Quinn of Pennsylvania University, in a paper read at the Modern Language Association in 1922, gave other significant facts, the following: (1) That at that time (two years ago now) seven graduate departments in this country giving a high class of graduate work in American literature every year, or on alternate years; (2) that there were seven other universities giving mixed courses in American literature; (3) that other universities

⁴A full account of Dr. Quinn's study may be found in the *Modern Language Association Review* for June, 1922. The fact that this paper was read at the organization in the Modern Language Association devoted to interest in graduate work in the colleges of the country is noteworthy. Dr. Killis Campbell, of the University of Pennsylvania, was the first chairman of the section, and it was at his request that Dr. Quinn made the study. It should be noted that Dr. Quinn's study was made so fast do things happen these days, by no means in proportion to the breadth of the movement as suggested in his paper two



ced as these were looking up in the amount of American literature given as graduate work; (4) that theses on American literature given in graduate schools reveal a growth in both breadth and depth; (5) that the number of undergraduate courses in American literature is increasing everywhere.

On the whole, there is a disposition, and a very consistent one seems to me, to re-focus American literature, to get a new perspective which will necessarily call for some shift of emphasis, not necessarily from the older writers to the newer, but out of deference to the enthusiasm for the things of our day, but simply because time has made necessary a re-evaluation. Indeed some of the older and more respected writers are even more popular today, and are better understood, than they were in their own time, as shown by the present attitude towards such authors as Thoreau, Poe, Emerson, and Whitman. In fact, the present age claims to have had a large part in the "discovery" of such significant men as Thoreau, Melville, Whitman and others. But before we venture a tentative suggestion as to the nature of the shift of emphasis in teaching American literature, and indeed in order to understand what we believe to be an adequate, consistent reason for the shift, let us look from the standpoint of their development at certain matters vitally connected with the teaching of American literature in the high schools. I have in mind (1) the aim of instruction in literature; (2) the content of the course, especially for the high schools; (3) the method of teaching; (4) the development of the American literature in our literature. We shall then be better able to make (5) some suggestions in regard to the reorganization of the course, or a shifting of emphasis, which is in various ways, I believe, eminently necessary.

We have already alluded to the consistent and persistent American conception that democracy should perpetuate itself by public education, and to the corollary of this, that

it is the chief business of the school, with its and everything else, to train the people of the citizenship. To confirm this, I need only remind of the renewed interest and activities in this direction the last ten years, more especially the last five or since the great World War. What was true of war was just as true of the Civil War and the Revolutionary War. Certainly the first two of these wars put in our high-school curricula a vast amount of material of value in the inculcation of patriotism may be sound, but whose claim to the realm of literature, in the face of other valuable American literature which received little attention, is hard to champion. Times when such material should pass, not out of curricula, I should say, but into the background where judgment can be obtained of its aesthetic value.

But let us not digress too far before looking at other facts in regard to the evolution of the teaching of literature in our public schools. Those concerned here chiefly with the high school in its development, a glance back of the beginning of the century emphasizes this persistent didactic aim of instruction in schools. Even while piety and grammar held sway in secondary education in New England—in the elementary grammar schools—the aim of education was the training of citizenship, for it was the conviction of our fathers almost for the first two centuries of our history, that eligibility to citizenship implied eligibility to orthodoxy and piety of a pretty straight-laced type. In the *Blue-Backed Primer*, which succeeded the *New England Primer*, Noah Webster, in the "advertisements to the reader" emphasized the politically didactic aim, and his idea of the national content of the schools, when he lamented the fact that the "writings which marked the Revolution" were apt to "lie neglected and forgotten," though they were perhaps not inferior to the creations of Cicero and Demosthenes." Twenty-five years after the establishment of the first high school in the country, twenty-four million



estimate of the political pyrotechnics of the Revolution in the hands of American children in the public schools. There were too long to follow closely this same estimate of the literary and political pamphlets of the Civil War and of the World War. Perhaps even yet the fire of these works has not cooled sufficiently for us to handle them without protective gloves. Even the late war was responsible, in its expedient for the time, for temporarily reviving the assumption in the high school orations, political documents and the like, whose chief characteristics were propaganda rather than literary merit. Similar contrary material was recently put in the high-school curricula for the same purpose. But now that the country has settled down to peace conditions, and is in the midst of a literary renaissance in literature as such, there is an increased demand for broadening both the aim and the content of the work in American literature.

As has been indicated, along with the dominant notion of the function of English teaching was to keep the passions burning, went the idea that the function of the high school was to prepare one for college or the university. Early speaking, from about 1880 to 1910, the universities received students on their diplomas from high schools largely dictated the classics used in the high schools. The influence of Uniform College Entrance Requirements Commissions reached its height about 1890, dominated to a great extent the classics taught in the high schools from about 1880 to 1910, and has been on the wane since. The decline of this organized force is clearly seen in the transferring of the matter of accrediting high schools from state universities to state departments of education.⁵ This latter movement indicates the widespread desire on the part of the high schools to expand their curricula in accordance with the

For brief but adequate accounts of the history of the effect of Uniform College Entrance Requirements on the curricula of the high schools from 1880 to 1910, see J. E. Stout's *The Development of the High School Curricula in the North Central States from 1860 to 1910*, particularly Chapter X.

broadening purpose of high school education and yet retain for their graduates the privileges of entrance into the university. The dominant democratic ideal to which we have referred several times demands that education be provided for all alike, and the part that this expanded curriculum has played in bringing more students into the high school has been a large part of the justification of the newer plan.

"What has all this to do," one may ask, "with the aims in teaching American literature?" Dr. James F. Hosis, in the *Teachers College Record* for September, 1923, puts the matter aptly, I think, when he says, "If the so-called course in literature in the high schools is to maintain itself, it must build up a more convincing program. . . . What high school literature needs and must develop is a functional organization. Each step in the course must perform its constructive service, a service apparent not only to the teacher but to the student. The student must enter upon the work of the term with a clear view of the goal, move toward it by certain and well-planned steps, feel from time to time that appreciable progress is being made, and lay down the task at the end with the bright hope that next year there will be a new world to conquer."⁶ Dr. Hosis's tentative suggestion looking towards a new organization leads him to state that the purpose of the courses in literature should be four-fold: (1) Teaching the student how to read; (2) enabling him to get an understanding of the American spirit; (3) giving him a fair conception of the English-World background of American literature; and (4) teaching him to find his way in a library. The first of these aims—teaching the student how to read—is quite broad, including not only the appreciation of the types of literature as such, but suggesting the organization and approach of subject matter. The fourth—teaching the student to find his way in the library—is intensely practical, but contemplates, of course, the student in the larger cities, whereas only about one out of every three or four students who attend high schools has the ad-

⁶*Teachers College Record*, September, 1923, p. 339.



s of the larger library. The other two aims—
an understanding of the American spirit, and
a fair conception of the English-World back-ground
uld be inclined to accept for their full value. In-
feel relieved thus to take my stand with those who
eve in the permanent and practical value of the real
ies, rather than with those who believe that the
which enables a student to make a cedar chest is
han that which helps him to enter with sympathy
riches of "To a Waterfowl," "Israfel," "The Con-
mn," "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloomed,"
ous," or that remarkable group of modern poetic
to the memory and personality of Lincoln.

discussion of the evolution of the purpose of teach-
erican literature has necessarily touched upon the
ment of the content of the course for this subject.
erspective of this development in three rather well
stages will help us to a better understanding of
conditions and tendencies. These stages may be
ed as follows: (1) The period of introduction of
n literature (1875—1890); (2) the reign of uni-
trance requirements (1890—1910); and (3) the
f renaissance and experiment (1910—1924).

y strike one strangely, at first, that American lit-
in the high school is only a half-century old; but
he case, for the few short selections from American
which found their way into the *Readers* up to about
e negligible so far as their worth as a body of lit-
used for aesthetic appreciation is concerned. At
his time Harvard and a few other colleges began to
some knowledge of the classics (chiefly English clas-
r entrance, which movement stimulated attention
eaching of classics in the high schools. The Amer-
rature which first found its way into the curricula
high schools was in the nature of short selections,
rom Irving and Cooper, and from the New England

group of authors whose days were already in the leaf. The "Reader" or the "Compendium of Literature" was the text, and the method was "a critical study" the nature of which is indicated by the language taken from a catalogue of a Mid-western city school in 1880. The selections from American literature were samples from *Sketch Book*, *Thanatopsis*, *Bunker Hill Oration*, and *Vision of Sir Launfal*. The point of view is indicated by this language of the catalogue:

These works are to be studied critically. Unfamiliar expressions, figures of speech, interesting words, all to receive careful attention.⁷

Naturally as the colleges began to feel a need for uniformity in entrance requirements, this uniformity began to show up in the classics, English and American literature suggested or oftener designated by the colleges for study in the high school. As the courses of study for high schools and the instructions for prospective candidates to colleges amply show, this movement led to the more critical study of fewer, but larger, units of literature in the form of "edited classics." By 1890 the Uniform College Entrance vogue was on, and, though it grew more liberal both in the number of classics included for "critical study" and for "reading," its supremacy lasted for approximately twenty years. In order that we may see more definitely the place of American literature occupied among the classics during this second period, I give here a brief analysis of a "suggested course of study for the typical high school, 1903."⁸ That the course proposed at this date was acceptable to the proposers and to the public is confirmed by the fact that in a reprinting (1914) of the same work it occurs no reason was seen for a change. The plan

⁷J. E. Stout, *The Development of the High-School Curriculum in the North Central States from 1860 to 1918*, University of Chicago Press, 1917, p. 141.

⁸Carpenter, Baker, and Scott: *The Teaching of English in the High School*, pp. 301-302.

only the classics recommended for intensive study for the average four-year high school. The ratio of English to American authors for the entire four years was 19 to 7; the ratio of English to American selections or groups of selections was 28 to 6. The types of English literature to be studied included the novel, the epic, the metrical romance, and other varieties of longer narrative poems, the formal and informal essay, the biography, and the lyric. The types of American literature were only the novel, the metrical romance or tale, the essay, and the lyric. The English classics were distributed very well throughout the four years. All but two of the selections from American literature were put in the second year, at which place a text in American literature was proposed. For the fourth year not a single selection of American literature was proposed. All the greater English authors from Chaucer to Browning were represented. Except indefinitely under the head of "selections from Lowell, Bryant, and Emerson," not a single American classic written since 1855 was proposed. And the lists for supplementary reading showed something like the same relative emphasis.

The third period, or period of Renascence and Experiment, in the development of the curriculum for American literature has brought about a decided disposition to reconsider the relative value of English and American classics for the high-school student, to shift the emphasis from certain of the long-accepted American authors to others whose vogue is newer, and to put into the high-school curriculum (and that of the colleges as well) a far greater portion of contemporary American literature than has been included heretofore. It was seen that the greater body of American literature studied in the high schools up to 1910 was written in the best days of the older New England group—around the mid-nineteenth century. The tendency, indeed the accomplishment, of the last fifteen years has been to bring American literature in the high schools up to date by including more and more of the representative work of authors produced since 1870. This includes such bodies of

literature as the regional short story, whose vogue lasted from 1870 to 1900; the modern novel, which goes back to the best days of Howells and Mark Twain (around 1880); and the essay, the drama to some extent, and the new poetry, which have a new interest for the literary public today.

This chronological following up of the increasing amount of American literature in the curricula of the high schools inevitably leads us to notice for a moment the claims of contemporary literature to a place in our high schools. This is the place in our discussion which brings us to the thickest of the fight today. Now I recognize, I think, what a serious business it is to choose the fundamentals of literature for the high-school student, who must suffer or prosper in later life largely according to the tastes he has developed for literature during his adolescent days. I have no quarrel with the person who insists upon the value of time in testing a work of literature, if he does not insist that time is the sole test; nor do I have any quarrel with the one who insists that the major part of the high-school student's brief, intensive study should be put on works that have stood the test of time. But in the teaching of literature in the high school there are other considerations than that which concerns itself with labeling literature as good, better, best, or even the old and the new. There is, for instance, the finding and development of interests; the direction of reading after interests are ascertained; the building up for the student of at least the elementary criteria by which any literature can be judged—these and many other matters, as every teacher of literature knows, must be carefully and conscientiously weighed. But, to put the matter briefly, I am in favor of including a very considerably larger proportion of contemporary literature in the high-school curriculum for the following reasons:

(1) The high-school student, by his very nature, is an adventurer who likes to touch life—this present life—at as many angles as possible. A varied experience—something that will give him travel, romance, a look-in at the seething life of business now going on in the world, a peep



ways of the society of this hour—these and a hundred things are what he demands. He is not the mature that his teacher is, and it is well that he is not; otherwise he might miss that full and varied reading which is essential to giving him a fund of experience which will enable him to interpret better both life and literature. The “movies” do not supply, modern literature in a measure does.

A modern story, novel, or poem—whether essential or not—is often, by reason of its immediate appeal to the student’s interest, his idiom, and his uneducated taste, the best approach to a more pretentious and searching study of a similar work of considerably more worth. To illustrate, I believe the student who does not at first catch the full significance of Browning’s “They Brought the Good News,” can hardly fail to do so after he has read Vachel Lindsay’s “The Bronco That Won’t Be Broken.” To say the least, he will have a more varied and richer experience, a broader and deeper sympathy with life after he has compared the two poems. I can easily conceive of *Penrod*’s leading one to *Tom Brown’s Days*; or, if he get only *Penrod*, he has done well. A teacher from my own experience in teaching will illustrate. I have actually precipitated upon unliterarily inclined boys writers about negro life as Irwin Russell, Thomas Page, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Joel Chandler Harris, Francis Hopkinson Smith with such stories of modern life in the southern city as Roy Cohen’s “On the Lighted Toe,” “Twinkle, Twinkle, Movie Star,” “The Hat That Failed,” and the like. I see the esthete, with his cynically “edited classic” before him, throw up his hands in holy horror and exclaim *Saturday Evening Post!* I am not disturbed. I had rather lead a student to “Chan” by way of the *Saturday Evening Post* than to “Many Marriages” by way of the syndicated Sunday supplement of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*—an illustrated edition of *Many Marriages* written down to popular taste. I see an exotic naturalism, a morbid pessimism, in many

disillusioned persons like Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters, and others, which the high-school student should not be led into. I do not deny a certain value to be derived from these works when the proper time comes, but that is after the high-school age. Luckily the normal, action- and character-loving boy or girl in the 'teens finds little interest in psychoanalysis, Freudianism, and exotic naturalism if a more objective and inherently wholesome outlook on life is to be had in such genuine and artful American works as *The Oregon Trail*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, and *The Gentleman from Indiana*.

(3) A vast amount of modern life is now being caught up into fiction, poetry, biography, and the essay, and these forms are the best means of bringing this life, in its fuller significance, to the student. To speak only of poetry, we have modern rural life in New England as seen in Frost's "Mending Wall" and "The Death of the Hired Man," or in Robinson's "Isaac and Archibald"; the rush, the bigness, the material heartlessness of the city as seen in Carl Sandburg; the buoyant, progressive, optimistically epic life of the West (in spite of the Main Street vogue) as seen in Vachel Lindsay; the New York of Untermeyer and Lola Ridge; the nature and folk interests of the New England coast, as seen in Amy Lowell's poems and Joseph C. Lincoln's *Ballads*; the early frontier life of the southwest and the idyllic beauty of the South as seen in Lomax's *Cowboy Ballads*, in Karl Wilson Baker's nature and reflective poems, in Hilton Ross Greer's *Voices of the Southwest*. These suggestions indicate the nature, and the value to the student, of modern life put into modern poetry alone.

(4) The forms of literature—the very media of artistic expression in English—are gradually being modified and broadened in modern times. New verse patterns, as seen in Sandburg, Miss Lowell, and others; occasional deviations from the well made Poe-pattern of short story; the more flexible and whimsical personal essay; the one-act play; the dialogue sketch—these and other types and patterns are expanding the media of literary expression, are within

easy grasp of the student, and are constantly growing more indispensable to the person who desires a ready approach to much good literature of the day.

(5) I am not so hypercritical as not to believe that a considerable amount of good poetry and prose—literature that will stand the tests we set for older literature—is now being produced. Let me illustrate with poets again, for it is more convenient to my purpose here, and I can speak with more assurance about poetry than I can about prose. Such poets as Masfield, Gibson, Davies, and De La Mare in England, come readily to one's mind. But I am concerned at this juncture with American writers. Personally, I believe that for presentation in high schools at least, Frost and Lindsay are two of the best. There is little work of either poet that will not call out a hearty response from high-school students. Robinson, Sandburg, Amy Lowell, Sara Teasdale, Edna Millay, Louis Untermeyer, Witter Bynner, Bliss Carman, Grace and Hilda Conkling, Arthur Guiterman and Don Marquis (for we must have our laugh), the Benéts—here are over a dozen, and of course I have left out from one to a half-dozen of your favorites—and perhaps even of mine. Not that all of the poetry of all these poets should receive extended attention—by no means. But there should be an introduction, which is easy to make in these days of anthologies and printing for popular consumption, and such an introduction will, I believe, vastly help in the ways which I have already indicated.

The essential facts in regard to the evolution of method of teaching literature can be put in a few words, and the bearing of this upon the place American literature should take in the high school readily seen. The persistence of the plan of using a classic as material for syntactical analysis and memory gymnastics may be clearly seen by a remark made to me recently by a young lady who attended a prominent high school in Texas since 1900:⁹ "I think I

⁹This young lady's experience was by no means indicative of conditions peculiar to Texas. There is abundant evidence to show that the methods here spoken of were characteristic of the average American high school, to far too great a degree, up to about 1910.

diagrammed every sentence in *Macbeth*," she said her how she liked the play, and her answer was commentary on a method of teaching literature again!" Though a pedagogue myself, I accepted the elementary answer as adequately meeting the requirements of "clearness, simplicity, and force." An extreme case, I may say, but it indisputably shows how far from the truth of literature the student was kept. Let me give you an impression of the teaching of literature, which is given by a modern humorist, Mr. Ring W. Lardner, who Van Doren characterizes as a "Philologist among the brows." I take this excerpt from Lardner's "What to of Learnt in High School," in the November, 1901 number of *The American Magazine*.

English literature was the baby that called for thought. They would make us buy a little booklet of one of the classics in it like, say, the Ancient Mariner. Then they would tell us to take it home and study the first ten stanzas and master the meaning of the last. Most of us boys done our studying at a 10x5 table with six pockets in it, but when we come yawning to school the next day they was no way for the teacher to know whether we had spent the night trying to remember Coleridge or the 14 ball.

One of the boys or gals would get up and recite the first few stanzas followed by questions in regard to the same.

Teacher: "Mr. Brown, what is an ancient mariner?"

Mr. Brown: "Why let's see. It's a, it's a kind of an old sailor."

Teacher: "And what is meant when it says 'he stopped on the peth one three'?"

Mr. Brown: "Well, well, it means, it means he stopped on a man. They was three men and he stopped on the three."

Teacher: "Mr. Starkweather, what is a loon?"

Mr. Starkweather: "It means somebody that is a little bit of crazy." (*Aside*) "Like a lot of teachers."

(Laughter from admirers of Mr. Starkweather.)

Teacher: "Let's have quiet. Now, Miss Millar, explain the line 'eftsoons his hand dropt he'."

Miss Millard: "It means that pretty soon right away he dropt his hand."

Mr. Starkweather (*aside*): "He didn't even have a pair."

Teacher: "Let's have quiet."

One month to six weeks would be spent solving the hidden meanings in the *Mariner* and then we would delve into the mystery of the *Lady of the Lake*, *Idylls of the King*, and etc. All and all we read six or seven or Tennyson's and Milton's and Scott's best sellers and read some of them twice and studied them line by line, but to show how baffling they must of been, why I can't recite a whole verse correct from none of them today whereas I can reel off a verse and chorus of *Good-by Dolly Gray* which come out that same year and which I can't remember studying at all.

It would be interesting to hear Mr. Lardner, who attended high school in Michigan, and the student from Texas compare notes. I am confident that audiences of such a colloquy, though they came from East or West, would find mutual interest in the topics discussed by these ex-students of the North and the South.

Without following in detail the evolution of the method of teaching literature, it is sufficient to say that it has gone from the devitalized, analytical, philological, superimposed practice of killing interest in a classic to the more human, socialized plan of calling out the student's spontaneous, aesthetic reactions to literature; from a deductive handling of petrified, critical opinions in which the student, for lack of training, could not share, to an inductive motivated building up of criteria by a fuller and more varied reading of literature; from the *memoriter*, unrelated plan of piling up dates, historical facts, and catalogues of works and authors not studied, to a more sensible selection of classics to be studied, and a more vital use of the histories of literature; from an almost utter neglect of the psychology of adolescence—the high-school age—to a utilization of indispensable facts of psychology and methodology. In all this there may have been some losses, but the gains are incomparably greater.

The third point for which I wish to contend is that at the high time we were readjusting our idea about the value, to the high-school student, of English and American literature, as well as our idea about the existence of a significant American spirit in our literature. I have alluded to the necessity of a refocusing of our national literary achievement, and to the necessity of shifting emphasis so as to get a more consistent and more just estimate of certain authors and of the literature as a whole. This is so much in accord with Professor Stuart P. Sherman, whom I regard as our stoutest contender for this point of view, that I shall let him speak here.

"In the course of the last hundred years, our literature has outgrown its youth and its poverty. It is abundant and it is becoming mature to the verge of sophistication. It has acquired a history, it has developed critical theories, it has participated in successive movements, it has produced schools and has evolved styles, it has discovered wide ranges of new material, it has made significant innovations in form, it has even put forth dialectical branches from a sturdily rooted vernacular stock. It has been subject to many influences, but it has also been widely influential. It exhibits all the resources and powers of a mature literature. At no very distant period in the future, its range and diversity will be so immense that Americans will be obliged to give it the central place in their program of reading, or they will be obliged to remain ignorant of their own national culture and its chief instrument. At the present time, it is a most conservative estimate to say that nine-tenths of our university teachers are more comfortable to discuss the literature of England than the literature of America; and the actual quantity—not to speak of the quality—of instruction provided in the higher study of our own literature is relatively insignificant." Continues to say: "This is obviously not a happy state of affairs for native letters; yet this condition is the natural consequence of a careless acquiescence in the contention that American literature must always be a part of English literature. Our n

literature will never hold its due place nor perform its proper work in our consciousness till we reverse the orthodox contention and declare instead, that the older English literature must forever be *a part of American Literature*.... It is only by using our native literature, by keeping it current, by making it saturate the national consciousness—it is only so that we can make our history serve and enrich and inform us, and give to our culture the momentum of a vital tradition.”¹⁰

It is well enough for the graduate student to keep a just sense of proportion when he is making a comparative study of English and American literature. But for this graduate student turned high-school teacher to parrot off to immature students the jargon of hypercritical pessimists or textbook makers who look only eastward, is damaging in the highest degree. If all that is said were true, the high-school student could not understand it. For instance, what could be more useless or damaging to the high-school student than this from John Macy's *The Spirit of American Literature*: “You can define certain peculiarities of American politics, American agriculture, American public schools, even American religion. But what is uniquely American in American literature? . . . The American spirit in literature is a myth, like American valour in war.” Like American valour in war indeed! The last date of the printing of Mr. Macy's book is 1913. I wonder if this statement will be revised in the next printing! Again, H. L. Mencken, among the most disillusioned, non-adjusted, and pessimistic egoists in this country, in diagnosing our national literature in the *Yale Review* for July, 1920, speaks of “its faltering feebleness, its lack of genuine gusto, its dearth of salient personalities, its general air of poverty and imitation.” Again he says: “Intellectually, we remain an undistinguished colony, cautious, eager for praise, and ever willing to be led.” “The thing that ails the literature in the United States,” he throws out with ego-centricity, “is precisely

¹⁰“For the Study of American Literature,” *Yale Review*, April, 1923, pp. 471-472.

what ails the general culture of this country, and that is a lack of civilized aristocracy." I imagine Mr. Mencken would find congenial atmosphere in company with a certain notable exile in Holland. He might at least appropriately express a loyalty to an alien aristocracy which many un-assimilated house-guests of Uncle Sam could not express during the World War.

No, the high-school student of American literature has nothing to gain in the inculcation of American ideals or in the way of enlightenment in art by being crammed with a diet so foreign to the truth and to his American make-up. He had better be spending his time reading Emerson, or Whitman, or Mark Twain, or Booth Tarkington, or Vachel Lindsay, or Robert Frost.

I come finally to some tentative suggestions in regard to organization and procedure in teaching American Literature in the high schools. These suggestions, I hope, have been anticipated in what has gone before. The organization I have in mind is one, I believe, toward which we are tending. I believe, too, that it better serves the purpose, the content, the method, and the inculcation of the American spirit in literature, and will, better than our traditional plans, develop in the student a desire to read, a capacity to enjoy, and an ability to interpret literature, than does the system which lacks that synthesis, that unity in variety, that organization so necessary for teachers of American literature, if, as Mr. Hosic says, we are to make our program for this subject in the high school convincing.

Let me say, first, that the plan does not involve such a radical change as to upset the equilibrium of even any teacher who has leaned rather heavily upon the organization dealt out to him in the traditional texts. In fact, it incorporates and utilizes both the chronological and the type method of presentation, and, quite as significant, has regard for the psychological and spiritual make-up of the adolescent high-school student. Let us, for want of a better



call it the subject or nucleus method. For instance, there has been no more dominant note in American literature and American life than the pioneer spirit. The body of literature that has accumulated around this theme is very abundant in both quantity and quality, and it includes practically all types of extant literature that a student encounters in the high school. The pioneer spirit in its larger sense—what an array, and what a miscellany comes crowding to one's mind! Whitman's *Pioneers, O Pioneers!*; Canby's *The Oregon Trail*; Cooper's *The Deerslayer* and the rest of the Leatherstocking series; Longfellow's *Miles Standish*; Franklin's *Autobiography*; Emerson's *The Covered Wagon* and *North of 36*; Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*; Bok's *The Making of an American*; Miller's, Lowell's, and Lanier's poems on Columbus; Lindsay's *Santa Fé Trail*; Whitman's and Bryant's poems on the Prairie; Mark Twain's *Roughing It* and *Life on the Mississippi*; Bret Harte's tales and poems; Willa Cather's *O Pioneers* and *My Antonia*; Howell's *A Boy's Life*; Garland's *Main-Traveled Roads*; Hay's *Ballads*; Sereno's *Spell of the Yukon*; Miller's *A Ship in the Desert* and Emerson's *Ride*; Lomax's *Cowboy Ballads*; Stewart Edmister's *Daniel Boone*; Louise Pound's *Ballads*; O'Connell's *Heart of the West*; and I have left out many more titles pertinent to the pioneer spirit. I gathered these as they came to my mind, without any regard whatsoever to chronology, type, or relative merit. Now throw these into chronological order, and you have the great pioneer spirit in America from its discovery to the present hour—and you have linked to it all the commercial, social, political, and aesthetic development the country has known. It is well, it is necessary, indeed, for a student to get a unifying, chronological sequence. Let him get it, but in a motivated way, from his history of American literature, from his American history, and from the comments of his better-read teacher. This is his logical synthesis. Again, throw the list into types, and you have run the whole gamut of the lyric, drama, and

the rest. Let the class-work and the student's writing and note-keeping provide for some consistent logical organization by types. Here is a logical, if somewhat mature and academic synthesis. Now, using a wise selection made with due regard to literary importance and the student's capacities and tastes, proceed simply with the theme—the pioneer spirit—the most natural and inherently the most logical synthesis of the three plans here named. The inevitable result will be a deeper and saner interest, a better sense of proportion, and a far more effective training in literature as such.

The psychological, as well as the synthetic value should be obvious. Clearly the student will not read either in class or as supplementary work all of such a list as I have given, even if he had the library facilities. But with this wealth and variety of material dealing with a great national impulse, he will find somewhere along the line a ready *entrée* into the subject, and be better prepared to pursue it in his own way, supplemented by the direction of the teacher, who should be guiding with due regard for the student's capacities, his tastes, and the relative worth of the works studied. The class-study may still deal with the mountain peaks. But the student may simultaneously be roaming in the contiguous hills or even in the valleys—for literary values are relative. The heights are never reached by a single bound—

“All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.”

The effect of unity then becomes somewhat like the artistic unity in a play, say that of *King Lear*. The filial ingratitude shown to Lear by his two nefarious daughters is, of course, the theme of the main plot. This is strengthened by the same theme as we watch it develop through diabolical machinations of Edmund against his innocent brother, and father. Add to this the atmosphere of a pagan, legendary background and the powerful disturbances in nature during the stormy night, and we have a triple harmony and synthesis which fastens itself on the sympathetic student ere

he is aware. The work thus induces an interpretation which invites attention to the poet's great art. So it is with the study of American literature when the student is allowed to follow a theme which invites his attention to other phases of that theme which deepen its significance for him.

A further and larger aspect of this synthesizing will be apparent when we remember that the various large lines of literary interest are continually crossing and recrossing. They may diverge, or converge, or run parallel. But they inevitably touch now and then, making one conscious of a vital relation. Thus the literature about the pioneer spirit connects with the literature about the Indian, or about the negro, or about the democratic spirit in America, or about industrial development, or about social development—endless, in fact, are the connections affording easy transition and a logical and intricate synthesis which motivates and vitalizes the study of American literature.

That the drift has been in the direction of something like this for the last few years is quite evident when one looks at the trend of textbook-making for high schools and colleges, as well as at the abundance of criticism which concerns itself with the evolution and the present status of American literature. The whole tendency is a natural outcome of the fact that our literature, as Professor Sherman says, "has acquired a history, has developed critical tendencies, has participated in successive movements, has produced schools and acquired styles, has discovered wide ranges of new material, has made significant innovation in form, has even put forth dialectical branches from its sturdily rooted vernacular stock."¹¹ Such titles as *The Story of Our Literature*, *The Great Tradition*, *The American Spirit in Literature*, *The Spirit of American Literature*, *Literature and Life*, *The Genius of America*—these and other studies familiar to teachers of English indicate the wide-spread consciousness of the new conceptions of

¹¹*Yale Review*, April, 1923.

our literature, as well as the desire to interpret this literature more adequately than it has been interpreted in the past. As the problem affects the teacher of American literature in the high school, there are several matters to consider which the limits of this paper—already too forbidding. Two fundamental matters I merely mention: library equipment for high schools and the training of teachers of American literature in the colleges and universities of the country. In both of these matters there are many hopeful signs of encouragement. Let us hope that within the present centennial decade the momentum so far acquired will bring us to far greater achievement in our American literature in our American high schools.

THE USE OF CLEAR AND CORRECT ENGLISH AS A REQUIREMENT FOR GRADUATION

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It is a generally accepted principle in our American colleges that every candidate for the bachelor's degree shall show at least a reasonable facility in the use of English; and it is now usually taken for granted that at least as many as two elementary courses in English shall be required of all candidates for any form of the bachelor's degree, even in special schools such as those of engineering, law, and the like. Naturally there have arisen among the various colleges certain difficulties in the standardization of the requirements in English; and naturally, too, the evaluation of the candidate's ability to write clear and correct English has been usually judged more or less mechanically on the basis of his having attained a mere passing grade in the one or two required elementary courses in English. It is, however, plainly evident to those who are acquainted with the facts, that numbers of our college graduates cannot express themselves in clear and correct English. The student may be able to scramble through his set themes and exercises in the English classes, and yet, when thrown on his own resources in the every-day use of English, he proves to be practically illiterate. It would seem, then, that a fair test of a student's ability to use clear and correct English would be his every-day use of English, his more or less extemporaneous quizzes and examinations, let us say, rather than his set themes and exercises prepared for the English class, and with the help of dictionaries, grammars, and kindly neighbors.

College students, like other mortals, are human. When they go into English classes, they know that they are to be graded on the quality of their English in everything they say or write in those classes, and hence they take particular

pains to meet the requirements of good form so long as they are under the direct supervision of the English teacher. They also know that in the other subjects of their course their professors and instructors are concerned primarily with the content or subject-matter of the course and examinations and that little or no attention is paid to the formal correctness or even the clearness and intelligibility with which this subject-matter is presented. In other words, most of the teachers in college courses, while giving full credit for content, pay absolutely no attention to the English used by their students. This laxness on the part of the instructors to penalize bad English inevitably leads the students into careless and indisciplined habits in the form and manner of their expression. Students who have made fairly good records in their freshman and sophomore English work have been known to show a steady decline in their ability to write good English in their junior and senior years. The usual excuses offered by students for this evident decline in the form of their English are: (1) In most of their courses facts and outlines are demanded in preference to clear and full statements; (2) haste in taking down great masses of notes, syllabi, etc., leads to scrappiness and fragmentary forms in the work and tests; (3) the demand for brevity and condensation of the so-called modern efficiency methods militates against clearness and correctness of expression.

The laxness on the part of the majority of instructors in applying the requirement for a reasonable command of clear and correct English by all students in all studies has led the faculty of the University of Texas to pass a resolution specifically demanding of every candidate for a bachelor's degree proof of his ability to use clear and correct English in the every-day routine work as shown in quizzes and examinations. This requirement, duly set forth in the catalogue, reads as follows:

The student must, before May 15 of his senior year, show such ability to write clear and correct English as to satisfy the Committee on Students' Use of English.

lish. To promote the habitual use of clear and correct English, the written work of every student in all his courses (theses, reports, quizzes, examination papers, etc.) is subject to inspection by the committee. It is the duty of each member of the teaching staff to require that his students shall be careful in their use of English, to give due weight in the making up of grades to the students' use of English, and to report promptly to the committee, submitting the evidence, any student whose use of English is seriously defective. Each session the committee will pass on the written work of every student above the rank of freshman. If any student be found deficient, the committee will prescribe for him such work as in its judgment is proper, and this work must be done to the satisfaction of the committee before the student can obtain his degree. (Catalogue, p. 115, 1922-23.)

In a large institution like the University of Texas the functioning of the Committee on Students' Use of English becomes a rather difficult matter. In the following paragraphs we shall try to set down the methods used by the committee and also draw some conclusions as to the effects of the work of the Committee on the student body as a whole.

The personnel of the committee is such as to represent all of the schools and most of the departments of instruction. The chairman must be an English teacher of professorial rank. There are two other English teachers on the committee to assist the chairman in the reading of papers, and there are representatives of the schools of engineering, law, business administration, and education, and a special representative of the sciences. The work of the committee is as equitably divided among these committeemen as possible, each member being held responsible for a certain number of students, usually within his own department, and each one being expected to sift out by the best methods which he can devise for his particular group the students who are weak in English. When these students are found, their names, with the concrete evidence in the form of quizzes, papers, etc., are reported to the chairman

of the committee, who proceeds to examine the papers in the students, and assess the necessary penalties. The committee meets in formal session only occasionally, then only to decide on methods of procedure and to carry out the work, its operation is continuous throughout the session. Any professor or instructor at any time during the year has the privilege of reporting any one of his students to the committee. The chief trouble we have found, however, is that the professors seldom take advantage of this privilege.

The committee has found it necessary to make out at the beginning of the fall term a complete card catalogue of candidates for degrees, the cards showing the previous English grades and the present year's courses of the senior. Seniors whose previous records in English show clear A and B grades are "cleared," unless, of course, one of them happens to be specifically reported later by one of his instructors. Seniors whose grades are low in English, or whose records show conditions or repeated deficiencies in English, or those whose credits in English have been transferred from some other institution, are subjected to stricter scrutiny. Fall-term quiz or examination papers are secured from their instructors, read by the English instructors or other members of the committee, and decisions are passed on by the beginning of the winter term. Opportunity is thus afforded of assigning to seniors additional work in English during the winter and spring terms preceding their graduation. In most cases the weak students, by concentrated effort on their English are able to bridge their deficiency during the last two terms of their senior year. Only about ten per cent of the seniors are ever reported before the committee, and only about twenty-five per cent of these are assigned additional work. Last year twenty seniors were forced to defer their degrees on account of English requirement, and there is likely to be another large number held up during the present session (1923-1924).

It is plain that it would be practically impossible for the committee to examine the English work of every senior.

above the rank of freshman; for that would involve the survey of some of the work of 3400 students. The committee operates on the assumption that all students who are still pursuing English courses are in a way supposed to be still under supervision of the English department and still in the process of improving their command of English. All freshmen and practically all sophomores and a great many juniors and seniors in the College of Arts are thus "cleared" on the basis of the fact that they are still taking English courses, though in cases of transfers and students with weak records in English, the instructors of the English classes are warned that these students will require special attention. Generally it is assumed that it is a safe policy to leave these students to the tender mercies of their English instructors, at least for the time being.

Some cases reported to the committee deserve only a warning or perhaps a bit of advice as to methods of self-improvement in English. A few students have been set to private study on some handbook of English, and some have been made to hand in from twenty to sixty pages of corrected exercises in these handbooks. Such assignments are sometimes found to be necessary because of the inability to adjust the student's schedule so as to make additional class-work in English feasible.

At various times during the year, the members of the teaching staff are urged to report from their classes any students whose work they find deficient in English. We have found in practice that only a small number of the faculty members pay any attention to this appeal. The committee does not wait for the professor to report the students who are weak in English. The members of the committee go to the instructors and call for the quizzes and examinations of certain students whose records in English indicate weakness in the subject, and thus, and thus only, is the committee enabled to sift out the weaklings in English and to apply the necessary remedy.

All cases examined by the committee are recorded and in case additional work is assigned, the record is checked up

later by a specific report from the instructor who conducts the assigned work. When the instructor reports that the student has made sufficient progress to justify his advancement toward the degree without further practice in English, the student is "cleared" for graduation, unless, of course, he is later reported by some other instructor. In such cases additional work may again be assigned before the student is allowed to proceed to graduation.

The work of the committee is growing more and more important, and its functioning more and more necessary, and, we hope, more efficient from year to year. The reasons for the existence and the efficient functioning of such a committee are evident. We are admitting each year an ever-increasing number of poorly prepared students, particularly poorly prepared in English; and in the case of the University we are receiving each year a larger number of transfer students from other institutions where the elementary training in English is even more unsatisfactory than it is in our own freshman and sophomore classes. To protect our degree, to protect our students, and to protect the general public, we are more and more in need of demanding a stricter enforcement of the requirement for the use of clear and correct English. The faculties of the foreign languages, I understand, are enforcing more strictly from year to year the requirement that each candidate shall show a fair reading knowledge of at least one foreign language. It is all the more important that a stricter interpretation of the requirement for a reasonable knowledge of English be enforced.

The effects of the functioning of the committee have begun to be felt by both the members of the faculty and the student body. Naturally it has taken a considerable time for the committee to hit upon the best methods of operation to secure the desired results, and naturally it has taken some time for the real meaning of the work of the committee to sink into the consciousness of the student body. But when something like fifty advanced students are called before the committee, when something like a dozen seniors are put to

work in freshman English, when something like half a dozen of these are forced to forego or at least defer their degrees, the whole student body suddenly begins to become conscious of the fact that English is a fundamental requirement for the degree and that it will behoove every one who looks forward to taking the degree to pay particular attention to the quality of his English, not only in the English classes, but in all his class work in whatever department. The effect is undoubtedly salutary.

The final aim of the committee is not to kill off but to strengthen the weaker students. Of course, if the committee functions legitimately, it will prevent some students from graduating each year, but its aim is to conserve rather than destroy. The student is given every opportunity for improvement. His papers are shown and his specific errors pointed out to him, and in every case where a penalty is assessed the student is made to realize the justice of the sentence passed on him. The assignment of extra work in English is regarded not as a penalty, but rather as an opportunity for improvement. The student recognizes that it is for his own good that the assignment is made. He also sees the justice of protecting the reputation and good name of the institution. He does not wish to go out from the institution with the marks of illiteracy upon him, nor does he wish to bring opprobrium upon his alma mater; hence in almost every case the student is satisfied with the action of the committee.

SOME PROBLEMS IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION*

BY MISS ANNE AYNESWORTH, *Professor of English,*
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Tom Sawyer, I think, would have made a model teacher of composition. One can imagine his students clamoring for the privilege of writing an essay, scheming to inveigle him into assigning a theme, bartering with him, even as did his playfellows who handed over their treasures for the privilege of white-washing a panel of the fence. Yes, Tom Sawyer would have solved the one great problem of the teacher of composition—how to make theme-writing desirable, enjoyable. And that, say what we will of the problems of teaching composition, is the one big problem. Preparation of text assignments, class recitations, conferences, quizzes, mechanics, parallel reading, and all the other details of the course will fall into line, once we kindle in our students the glow of composition, the pride and joy of creating, of self-expression. The task is not an easy one, but the obstacles in the way of its accomplishment are more subjective than objective. Those of us who fail will find the explanation not so much in overcrowded classes, limited time, or the inadequate foundation of our students, as in ourselves. "Fool," said the sonneteer's muse long ago, "look in thy heart and write." And the composition teacher's guardian spirit today might paraphrase that counsel: "Look within thyself and inspire thy students to write."

Is it too much an elaboration of the obvious to say, then, that the most important factor in the problem of making theme-writing interesting is the teacher, his personality, his attitude toward life and toward his work? A teacher of composition, more, perhaps, than any other instructor, has need of what a college president of my acquaintance places

*Paper read before the English Section of the Texas State Teachers' Association at Fort Worth, November 30, 1923.

first on his list of qualifications for a teacher—a radiant personality. He should be a person of broad sympathy and genuine enthusiasm, keenly, eagerly interested in “the warm and palpitating facts of life.” No disgruntled person of narrow views and arid philosophy should attempt to teach young people composition. Nor should the person who has not an abiding faith in the value of his task, a profound respect for the significance and dignity of it; and, as Mr. William Trufant Foster, in his “The Morale of the School,” puts it, a “capacity for illuminating today’s lowly labor with high and remote purposes.”¹ A teacher of composition with a pride and joyousness in the performance of his task dignifies the work of writing a theme, makes it an achievement worthy of the student’s best effort, worthy, too, of the teacher’s interest and sympathy. To such a person the reading of papers will never be mere mechanical drudgery. “Grading themes,” cried one desperate instructor, “is the most soul-deadening, mummifying process in the world. I’d rather scrub floors.” And she had better scrub floors. But I do not believe she would do even that well until she learned to get some fun out of her work. Why, the stupidest theme has some reflection of personality, and even stupid people are alive—and flaunting a challenge to one to make them less stupid! That composition teacher, then, who merely “grades” papers, who is bored by the themes he reads, who lacks the vital spark of joyous, infectious enthusiasm, should not teach. He should sell oil stock, perhaps; he should not tamper with composition.

So much for the teacher’s attitude toward life and toward his subject. What of his attitude toward his students, those whom he is to lead to self-discovery, whose tastes he is to revolutionize, so that the things they once hated they shall now love—themes, for instance? Surely no teacher has greater need of tact, of sympathetic understanding and interpretation than the composition teacher. He it is who must know the students better than they know themselves,

¹*The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 131, p. 18.

who must discover their possibilities, and lead them to that discovery. He must have unlimited power of inspiring self-confidence. He must know, somehow, the time and labor that went into an *F* theme, and appreciate the tragedy of the failure. He must share the joy and triumph of an *A* or a *B*—sometimes even a *D*. Nothing important to the student should be trivial to him. He must be able always to get the student's point-of-view, the youthful, buoyant outlook upon life and the student's little world. That point of view will not be readily conceded to him. There is an assumption among students that all teachers—English teachers in particular, probably because of the difficulty of their subject—are old in years and in thought. Many of us have chuckled over some such delightful bit from a freshman theme as this one quoted by a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly*: "Although nearing thirty, she had something still of the spring of youth in her step." Against their better judgment, then, the instructor must convince his students that he is young in spirit. They will never put it just that way, but they will admit, after a while, that he is not "hard-boiled,"—a very opprobrious term, that, in the vernacular of youth,—and in time they may even proclaim him a good sport. Beyond that praise, mortal teacher can not hope to go. Then it is he will have won his entrance to the students' confidence, the inner workings of their minds and hearts. After that his task may be accomplished by phenomenal patience, plus indefatigable energy, plus a sense of humor. If the instructor is of the type which, as missionaries, would expect all of the heathen to be speedily converted, burn their idols, and live exemplary Christian lives ever after, he will not succeed. That is not the way of the heathen nor of the student of composition. Both are given to apostasy; both cling tenaciously to their graven images. One should have the missionary spirit of service, but he must not take himself too seriously; he must be able to smile at his own failures. And always, unrelentingly, he must work. I am tempted to say that unless he is more interested in his *F* students than in his *A* students the com-

position teacher will not succeed. The *F* students are a bigger challenge to his powers, a bigger triumph when they are saved. The *A* people the average instructor can teach. Let us accept them as a gift from the kind fates, an antidote for too much of the commonplace, perhaps, but remember that the *F* people are our real opportunity.

The one important problem of the composition teacher, I have said, is making his students want to write. And the outstanding problem within that problem, you may accuse me of saying, is being born with the right gifts. Shall we not rather say it is testing ourselves, seeing what is lacking, cultivating the desired qualifications? It is the problem, then, of setting up and of attaining our ideals as teachers of composition. But, given all the innate powers any teacher should have, plus the acquired characteristics so essential in a teacher of English, we shall find baffling, specific problems upon whose solution depends our ultimate task, making the writing of themes natural and desirable. The primary object of a composition course, we say, is to teach the student to write clear, readable English. The average student does not do this. He can not write clearly because he cannot apply the principles he recites so glibly; he can not write readably because he has, or thinks he has, nothing to say. Our tasks are, then, to give our students more of the art, the actual doing, rather than science and abstract theories, and to lead them to a broader range of interests. And these ends may be attained by means of carefully directed recitations, parallel reading, and theme-writing.

In the classroom we find innumerable evidences that the student is developing no thought power. The average student does not know how to study. He memorizes rules, recites them word for word, and thinks he has discharged his duty. He can tell you in detail the difference between exposition and description; yet if you assign an expository essay he will in all probability describe the thing he was asked to explain. The fault is largely ours. Too often we give quizzes that call for little more than a reproducing of

text material. The student gets the idea that the object of the test is to find out how much he knows. He must get information. In a composition class there should be no question in an oral or a written quiz that can be answered solely from the text. Every question should demand thought, some application on the part of the student. If the class is studying coherence and emphasis, the teacher should not ask how these principles are observed in the writing of a theme. The question should be more specific: "How would you secure coherence and emphasis in a paper on 'Writing a Theme'?" Students will answer glibly that they get coherence by arranging material in the chronological, simple-to-complex, or enumerative, order; emphasis by placing the most important points in the most important places, and by giving them most space. They will not see it worth while to say what those important points are. By careful questions they may be led to see that it is as important to give all the possible orders of arrangement when one is used as it would be in telling how to make biscuits. They will give the general and irrelevant information that yeast and baking powder are used to make bread rise. They will be led to see the opportunity they missed, that of giving concrete illustrations, referring definitely to the topic assigned. Questions and suggestions may result in some such conclusions as: choosing a subject, collecting material, planning and outlining the essay, writing and revising it. The discussion follows that the chronological order is used. Then it will be easy to show the absurdity of getting emphasis by putting the most important point last, when the important point (which is, as the teacher must lead them to see, planning the essay) must logically come before writing and revising. By such questions we may lead our students to realize that composition is an art rather than a science, that text material is worthless unless it is applied.

But while we are developing the ability to think for themselves we must not neglect that other problem of giving the student more to think about. We must convince our students that a composition course touches life at many

There is a tendency among students to pigeon-hole their English, to treat it as a thing peculiar to the English class, a thing to be folded away at other times like their Sunday clothes. It is salutary sometimes to find what our course connotes to our students. "What did you get," I asked a correspondence student, "from your study of rhetoric in the high school? What is the purpose of rhetoric?" Her answer was: "Rhetoric is tarring up [and by the slip in spelling she spoke more suggestively than she realized] pieces of literature to see how they were written." Too often it is just that. And our so-called composition courses are too often limited to the study of rhetoric. We might profitably dispense with a formal text-book in composition classes, but if we must use one, we should not limit our subject-matter to its pages. We should not lay out too definitely the text-book ground we must cover. We should make our courses flexible, broad in their range. How can we show our students the broadness of our field? Oral composition, that much abused, much debated hobby of late years, furnishes an opportunity. Where it is possible, each student should select a magazine which he is to read each month. He may comment briefly in class on the articles he found most interesting. Short reports may be assigned on subjects that will acquaint students with present-day affairs. The habit of reading the daily paper should be encouraged. Students should be familiar with the names of rulers and ministers of other countries; they should know something of foreign affairs, strikes, prison conditions, the little theatre; they should look up articles on folk lore, the development of American Universities, political questions, prominent people of the day, poetry, moving pictures—the greater the variety the better. Out of this will come material for themes. Out of it will grow the realization that English deals with life. Interesting, live discussions can not be over-estimated. They give an opportunity for the student's natural desire for self-expression, and from this oral comment it is but a step to expressing in a theme ideas that can not, for lack of time, be discussed in class. We

may, of course, carry the practice to extremes, at the manner of the modern mother, who allows her child to destroy the furniture, on the grounds that she must check interest and self-expression. But the skillful teacher does not fear digressions. He can relate practical material to the lesson, or he can swing the discussion to the starting point.

Thus through class work that stresses the concrete, that opens doors to great funds of vital, interesting material, we work toward our goals of leading our students to apply principles and of giving them material to which incidentally, the principles may be applied. Parallel results are less directly, less apparently, perhaps, but not less effectively achieved. No composition course, for example, with its present-day insistence on practical value, on fitting material for business life, is worthy the name of an English course if it does not implant in the student a love of literature, a love that finds expression in eager, voluntary reading. All too frequently the student's attitude toward reading is, to quote Mr. Chesterton, that of a man who wishes "to swallow a story like a pill that it should be good afterward," rather than "to taste it like a glass of wine that it might do him good at the time." For all their interest in the study of a classic, many students do not know how to read for fun. At first, I think, no prospect of ten reports should hang over the heads of the student; he should avoid the word report altogether and set aside certain class and conference periods for the discussion of books. It is well to begin with the ones likely to be most interesting. A student who is not fond of reading will find himself developing a certain proprietary interest in a book, a loyalty to it, a desire to make it appear at least as well as his neighbor's book. He will discover good things he had not seen before; some of his classmates may read for their next assignment the book on which he reported. But here a word of caution is needed: the teacher should encourage absolute sincerity. No

should get the idea that he is expected to say he likes a book, or that his dislike may affect his grade. The instructor, of course, should supplement what has been said, subtly bringing out the fine points that are overlooked. One of the advantages of such a discussion is that it gives the student a definite idea of the things worth observing in a book. Plot, quite naturally, will be his first interest, but gradually he may be made to see the fineness of the characterization and the methods of portrayal used. Of style, I think little should be said at first, though it is well to ask the students to read to the class passages that seemed to them fine or beautiful. The value of the book will, perhaps, be most difficult to get at. A student's final estimate of a thing depends on whether it is pleasing or not, whether the characters are admirable or objectionable, whether the story ends happily. Through class discussions he may see, as in no other way, that the test is how well, how truly the writer has done the thing. "I didn't like a single one of the characters in *Emma*," one student may declare; "they are all so silly." And quickly from another student comes the protest: "But I know some people just like them. They are real folks." There will be students, too, in every class who help the instructor in leading the other students to see the absurdity of clinging to childish ideals of literature, of insistence upon fairy-tale endings. Written reports may come later, and as the student has learned from these discussions a sense of values, an appreciation and enjoyment, his essay will be, not the mere summary that book reports are so likely to be, but a frank, natural expression of his opinion, of what he got from his reading.

I cannot omit the problem of dealing with our students' requests for current novels as parallel. We make a serious mistake, I think, in excluding present-day books from our reading lists. Literature is life, we teach our students—not past life, but life in the present as well, life in the making. They must not feel that literature is a finished thing, the production of men who are all dead. Many of the books we are asked to "count" as parallel are, of course, worth-

less or even harmful, but we gain nothing by telling the student bluntly that his favorite best-seller is sentimental. We arouse in him thus a prejudice against the literature we want him to like, and lose our opportunity. We should let him count his selections (he will read them anyway); parallel reading, it is true, but we need not tell him plainly our reasons. We may ask him to read one of George Eliot's works and compare it with his present novel. It is possible, though the chances are against it, that we may be able to lead him to discover for himself the sentimentality, shallowness, and falseness of his book. It is well, too, to suggest as substitutes for the student's wise choice some of the best of present-day books. We should not fail to make up our reading list largely from older classics, but we need not guard them too jealously against the claims of later fiction. A student who has been reading *Main Street* a few years ago read next, at his teacher's suggestion, *Vanity Fair*, and made an interesting comparison of the two books as to purpose, method, beauty, and truth.

I have tried to show that, while the contribution of outside reading to the composition course is an indirect one, it is nevertheless a vital one. More than any other part of the course, perhaps, parallel reading contributes to the solution of our problem of giving our students deeper and fuller experience; hence the importance of giving them the right attitude toward reading, of developing their taste for the best. Meantime, it is our task to help the student discover what he wants to write, as well as what he wants to read. He knows his own interests, of course, but it will not occur to him that they have any connection with a literary conference—and the value of regular personal conferences cannot be overstressed—the teacher has his opportunity of knowing the students as individuals, of discovering their tastes and their hobbies. A boy, whether he plays football or not, will enjoy discussing football. At a suggestion he will write on the game, on the qualities of a good player, perhaps, on the part the school plays in making a

team. The student interested in science will gladly write an account of a field trip or an experiment. The radio enthusiast will be eager to tell something of his hobby. Most students are interested in "Some Improvements I Should Suggest for My Home Town." Character sketches have an appeal if presented in the right way. "Suppose you were Dickens, or Thackeray, or Thomas Hardy," we may say to a student; "what person of your acquaintance would you put into your next book? Why? How would you do it? Write something about this character, showing his most interesting traits." "School Spirit" has a wide appeal. Students like to develop a paragraph from some such topic sentence as: "College spirit demands more of us than attending rallies and yelling at games." But it is not my purpose to furnish a list of theme subjects. Rather, I would illustrate what has already become a commonplace, that theme material must be related to students' lives. That point is stressed in a recent text-book, one passage of which I cannot refrain from quoting: "Forget that you ever wrote a 'theme,' and ask yourself now: 'Should I like to write?' Of course you would—if you could. And you can. You have had, and you will have, some experiences that will not be repeated exactly in any other life—that no one else can express exactly as you would express them. And the art of expressing what you have experienced, what you think, what you feel, and what you believe can be learned."

"If you stop to consider the matter, you will realize that self-expression is one of the laws of life.—Hence the more quickly you learn that successful self-expression is one of the greatest pleasures in life, the more readily you will be able to turn energy in the right direction, and the more fun you will get out of the process."

Students respond eagerly to the challenge of those words. Theme-writing takes on a new interest, their own experience a new importance and dignity. But even when we have

²Manly, John Matthews and Rickert, Edith: *The Writing of English*, pp. 3-4.

made the student see the relation between his experience and his themes, the problem is not completely solved. On the question of subjects for essays we have two extremes among instructors—those who are accused, and perhaps justly, of trying to make writers of their students, and those who insist upon fitting people for practical life, for business life. In an article, "The Public Contacts of the English Teacher," in a recent issue of the *English Journal*,³ Mr. J. W. Searson of Nebraska stresses very forcibly the practical aims of the composition course. Teachers should make assignments, he says, that bring their classes into contact with labor, thrift, savings. They should visit bakeries, blacksmith shops, and factories. Students should be asked to write on what they would do to improve their business or to increase returns if they were proprietors of moving picture theatres, confectioners, bank presidents, milliners, bakers, traffic policemen. The practical value of such assignments is obvious; Mr. Searson nowhere implies, however, that business efficiency is the sole objective, that we should stop with the practical, the utilitarian. And yet there are some teachers to whom this is all of fitting students for life. Improving business, increasing returns! One is tempted to cry out in the words of Markheim to the dealer: "A hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, Man, is that all?" "Make the student say what he means," demands the business world. Make him say what he means—yes. But make him mean more.

A broad, fine conception of our aim is that of Professor Hibbard, quoted by Mr. Charles Robert Gaston in an article, "Pegasus and Kit," in the *English Journal* for February, 1923. "The fundamental purpose of English," Professor Hibbard says, "is life—interpretation of life, the relation of the student to life, and a revelation of what a student may do with life."⁴ Our theme subjects, then, should call for something more than mere putting together of facts. They should make some appeal to the imagination. They

³*The English Journal*, Vol. XII, pp. 450-459.

⁴*The English Journal*, Vol. XII, p. 92.

should develop in the student the ability to see the significance of the finer, deeper things about him. A writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* some years ago, in a clever little essay, "The Daily Theme Eye," said of the cultivation of this power: "It has clothed the daily walk with interest, the teeming, noisy town with color and beauty." He learned to watch for and treasure incidents that were sharply dramatic or poignant. He found in the surroundings of his life "a heightened picturesqueness, a constant wonder, an added significance." Suppose our students are going to be clerks, farmers, real estate agents. Will they be poorer clerks and farmers and agents for developing imagination, spiritual resources, thus adding to the pictures for "that inward eye which is the bliss," not only of solitude, but of drudgery and drab hours? Despite the accusations of bankers and managers of business concerns that our English fails to function in practical life, despite the criticism that we are trying to train writers, I insist that all this is a vital part of the composition course. Is the music teacher trying to train all her students to be great musicians? Is she failing to prepare a girl for practical life when she trains her to love and appreciate music? Is the teacher of literature failing? Is the student to believe that all the revelations of truth and beauty are reserved for the great and the wise? Are they all embodied in literature? Is there not something left for him—not to put into literature, but to discover for himself, to feel, and enjoy, and try to express? I refuse to accept as my goal merely giving a student the ability to write clear, well-organized, accurate English, though even that goal I often fail to reach. Unless I make life richer for him, train his eye to read the fine print in nature, I fail. Unless I arouse in him the power to interpret life, to discover beauty and spiritual significance in the commonplace, I fail. I refuse to be satisfied with training only for clear thinking. Somehow I must train for the understanding heart as well.

But while I am training him thus, I need not neglect the practical side. The need for training in clear thinking, in

organization, is unlimited, and every piece of written work affords opportunities for such training. There is the outline, usually regarded by the student as a device of the instructor. It must be a part of every piece of writing. We lose some of its dark mystery if the students work in class a composite outline for some simple theme which they later develop from it. As they outline the specimen texts, too, they may learn, to their surprise, that the plan is not an arbitrary thing, but a logical, natural method of construction. Outlining in class should awaken in students at least a pleasure or interest comparable to the familiar one of taking a mechanical toy or a clock to pieces to see how it was put together. And meantime, it is well now and then, to ask for a copy of the outline for a student before that theme is written; to give a conference over the outline; to revise it, and make it a better guide for the student's use.

On matters of form we have two extremes. There are the instructors who stress accuracy of spelling, punctuation, and grammar until, in this age of complexes, we may say that they have a mechanics complex. And there are the—more dangerous, perhaps—of the sentimental type who insist that attention to formal matters kills originality. The latter is said more dangerous, because originality is not often spoiled by insistence on good form, whereas much sloveness of thinking and writing results from a lofty disdain for these matters. "If my theme sounds as if it were carved out of granite," wrote a talented, but careless young student who took offense at my comments on the form of her paper, "attribute it, please, to the fact that I am devoting all my time to comma blunders and fragmentary sentences." But her theme did not have the carved-glass sound, and her pride in the victory she won that year over her bad habits in mechanics was second only to her joy in doing a thing well. We may, it is true, stress matters of form until we give our students a distaste for them. There is a warning worth heeding in this protest from a student in one of my classes a few years ago: "If y



to dinner and served dried beans with every course, and not accept any more of your invitations. Too much punctuation and parsing are the driest of dried

But usually, I think, the student's attitude toward form is a reflection of the teacher's. Too many teachers admit, if not by word, at least by manner, that the teaching of mechanics monotonous drudgery. We should not assume an apologetic air when we teach punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure, but make our students feel that there is a dignity in learning to good standards. The real logic, the practical-saving value of punctuation we should strive to make apparent. Many of the student's mistakes are due, not to ignorance but to haste and carelessness, a slip of hand in the first draft of a theme. It is a mistake to ask that the first draft be submitted with the final theme, and to compare the two in conference. The student, against his will, perhaps, is proud of the difference between them, proud of his increasing ability to correct his

I suppose it is unnecessary to say that the teacher should never make corrections for the students. He should mention by marginal comments to all errors, and then let the student correct these errors in writing and submit the paper to conference. His corrections are frequently worse than the original error, but after the attempt to make a more receptive attitude toward the teacher's suggestions.

On the matter of style I have little to say. Clearness, of course, is the first objective. A wider range of words, use of the specific rather than the general term, variety of sentence structure, smoothness—these the instructor may encourage. Spontaneity, humor, grace, and rhythm we may encourage, but not overstress. Development of the student's ability to appreciate good style, to realize that a thing is well said, comes often from the reading of themes in class. The work of a great writer can so inspire a student to try to write as effectively as can a pleasing paper written by some one older, no more experienced than himself. He may

tell you blusteringly that of course he couldn't write anything as good as that, but you know that in his secret he believes he can—and means to try. Informal composition is more than any other form of composition, perhaps, an appreciation of spontaneity, of pleasing expression. "After studying this volume of *Atlantic Monthly* essays," wrote one of my usually matter-of-fact students, "my thoughts are like ponies that have been pasturing on pepper grass." I pass over the authenticity of her implication as to the effect of pepper grass on ponies; it is of little importance as compared to the freshness of the thought and expression. The instructor should be on the alert to encourage even slight improvement in style and to commend a student forcibly or gracefully said, if only one short phrase in his paper. He should demand no more of his students than the proverbial clearness, but in his heart he should hope for more and expect—more.

He will read many papers, of course, that are neither forceful nor clear, but he must not indulge in self-pity. He surveys the stack of themes. He must not let his students get the idea that, as in their grammar-school days, "the teacher gets kep' in too." His attitude toward them must in the end be their attitude. His promptness in returning papers will be taken by his students as an indication that he could scarcely wait to read what they have written. His criticisms, too—and every paper returned should have a written comment,—are a great factor in arousing in the student an attitude of interest and pride in his writing. They should be sympathetic; they must be genuine, and, in seeming paradox—they must, on every honest occasion, sound some note of praise. If they are piquant and sharp, so much the better. Sometimes it may be necessary to startle a student by a sharp criticism, but such comments are the famous classic attributed to a professor in the University of Chicago, though merited by students who are spending time in an advanced elective, should be sparingly used with young students. I can not refrain from quoting an example of what one should not write on high-



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doing a difficult, but worth-while, thing. If a lad in
ual-training course comes from the machine shop,
e alight with pride in the cedar chest or the table he
ade; if a girl in home economics is aglow with joy
e making of a dress or a loaf of bread, I refuse to
that we cannot bring to that same boy or girl a
d glow of pride in a piece of written work well done.
eve it would be to resign myself to the all too gen-
sumption that the urge for expression, for creation,
human heart finds expression in the material rather
n the spiritual.

THE MINIMUM OF LINGUISTIC TRAINING NECESSARY FOR HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH*

BY MISS HALLIE D. WALKER, *Teacher of Journalism and Business English,*
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One who has left the beaten track of traditional English for Business English and Journalism may seem an inappropriate one to discuss this question, and perhaps the chairman of the English Section had not known me many days when I trod the "traditional English paths," he would not have chosen me to talk to you about the minimum linguistic requirements for teachers of English; for he would have expected me to say that Latin and Greek and Saxon are unnecessary luxuries in this day when we are trying to get the child ready for his place in the business world.

However, the thing that the vocational "crank" is trying to do is not so far removed from the thing the "dyed-in-the-wool" classicist is trying to do, and since I am a combination of these two extremes, the ideas I have to suggest will probably not be so very different from yours after all.

In the first place, of course, the educator, vocational or cultural, is trying to develop the child, and unless he does this, his efforts are useless. You cannot teach a child how to do manual labor intelligently unless you teach him to think.

The chief thing we are trying to do in English is to help the student express himself. Of course, we are also trying to teach him to love literature—a point that I will touch upon a little later—but to inspire him to put his thoughts into words, simple though the thoughts may be.

*Paper read before the English Section of the Texas Teachers' Association at Fort Worth, November 30, 1923.



crude though the first efforts at expression may prove, a greater thing even than to teach him to read what other men have written. I have found that the child tries hard to express himself through the work in Journalism through the traditional English work because it gives him a thrill to see his work in print. I have found, too, that his greatest deficiency in self-expression is due to limitations of vocabulary, and probably all of you who teach English find the same thing. Ward-school students, high-school students, college students—all use over and over the same limited vocabulary. Their productions have a flat, insipid flavor, largely because they lack vivid, concrete images in which to clothe their thoughts. Some educators object to the requiring of the learning of new words and call it parrot work, but, as George Herbert Palmer says in "Self-Cultivation in English," we cannot learn new words without gaining new ideas. Wholesome vocabulary and the right kind of word study, is one of the most stimulating forms of work a teacher can devise. Those of you who have sat in one of Miss Roberta Lavender's classes or who have heard her talk about etymology know just how vivid and stimulating this word study can be.

Even for the appreciation of literature one needs to study words. I would not go so far as Ruskin goes in *Sesame and Lilies* when he insists upon tracing every word back to the original Greek or Hebrew in order to get the meaning of a word. As he does in Milton's *Lycidas*, but is not his policy a better one than that of those modern pedagogues who call any intensive study of an English classic "picking the bones" or the play to pieces" and who advocate a kind of "digging the ground in high places" in the reading of literature?

The plea that the child should read good literature in order to learn to enjoy good books is all right, but how is one going to get the highest form of enjoyment out of what one does not really understand?

Our language is, as we all know, made up of many different elements. The ideal teacher of English must know something at first hand of several of these languages, for if

he does not, how can he develop in himself the feeling that is so necessary for the one who is to write, to teach others how to write, to interpret literature, to teach others to interpret literature?

I should say, then, that the teacher of English should have at least two years of college Latin (after three or four years of preparatory Latin in a secondary school), two years of Greek in college (probably beginning Greek in the first college year), and two years of historical English (Old English and Middle English). I might also suggest two years of modern language, but I realize that I have already counted off six out of the twenty courses leading to the B.A. degree, and that you will probably remind me of the fact that the prospective English teacher should take also a few courses in English literature, in History, and so on.

Let us consider, first, the question of Latin. Has it been your experience as a teacher of English that the student who has had even a year of Latin can be picked out of an English class? He can reason out the meanings of words from Latin derivations, whereas the student who has had no Latin has to run to the dictionary every time he meets a new word. If this is true of students, it is true of teachers. Those with a good foreign language foundation can stimulate to word study those who have had no foreign language work.

Some, as I have already said, object to intensive word study in the study of English and call it hair-splitting, but there is nothing that develops accuracy of thought and clearness of expression more than does the intensive study of words. "Trifles make perfection, but perfection is no trifle." Once get a child fired with zeal for learning words, and his attitude toward his work is changed. Zeal may lead him to extremes like that of the freshman college girl who wrote on a theme, "Wind and rain are usual concomitants of such weather," but he is on the way to better things. And it is through the study of the elements of our language that much of the help in vocabulary building is to come.

study of Latin, too, has given to many a person a better idea of English grammar than he had before. Many a student gets to college without knowing the difference between a clause and a phrase, a participle and an infinitive, and while probably there are not many English teachers in this sad condition, no English teacher is going to be content by too good an understanding of grammar. That the illogical reaction against the study of English grammar has been a great mistake is the earnest conviction both of many English teachers and of many foreign language instructors.

As I have been speaking of the value of Latin. Unfortunately, I have myself had no courses in Greek, though I am aware of the benefits that have come to many from the study of Greek. I quote a short article taken from the *New York Daily News*. (These articles from which this is taken were not written from the professional standpoint but were sent in by people in all walks of life. They have been reprinted by the American Classical League.) The article reads as follows:

Why Study Greek?

The question never presents itself to a boy or girl, "Shall I study Latin or Greek?" It comes in the form, "Shall I study Latin and Greek?" If you have time or opportunity for the study of one of the classical languages your choice will naturally fall on the Latin. But the reasons for studying Greek are essentially the same as those for studying Latin. Latin gives you a lot of good things. Greek gives you some more. The reasons are the same, they apply with varying force to the two languages, as I shall now try to show. Greek, like Latin, is a help in understanding the structure of English sentences. This is true of Greek for the same reason that it is true of Latin, and, I believe, in an equal degree.

Greek, like Latin, is a help in learning and remembering the meanings (and shades of meanings) of many English words. English has not borrowed so many words

from Greek as from Latin, but it has borrowed a considerable number. The borrowing from Greek is of later date. (Here the writer gives examples of words like analyze, syntax, politics, athletics, etc.)

3. Greek, like Latin, is a help in spelling. In the list of 100 frequently misspelled words, which I have previously mentioned, fourteen are Greek. The laws of euphony—"pleasing sound"—in Greek are rather strict, and certain combinations of letters are always required by the Greeks. When these combinations have been learned, the spelling of words of Greek derivation is not difficult.

4. And now the real reason—mental stimulus, cultural enjoyment. I have said that much of the world of ancient Greece comes to us through the Latin. It does, but it comes at second hand. The Greek literature is just as worthless having at first hand as is the Latin. Some of the pleasures must wait for your maturer years, but you must make the beginning of your journey toward them in your youth. In philosophy, in poetry, in history, in oratory, Greece has furnished some of the greatest names of all time.

In the third place, the teacher of English should know something of Old English and of the changes which took place in our language that developed Old English into Middle English and Middle English into Modern. There is much in the development of our grammar (the shuffling of inflectional forms, for instance), and of our vocabulary that is clearer after a study of Old English and Middle English. Chaucer's and Milton's *yclept* becomes intelligible when one recognizes *y* as the natural outgrowth of the Old English *ge*—, the prefix of the past participle. The symbol "Y," commonly miscalled "y" in such expressions as "olden times" and "Ye house beautiful," is more intelligible when understood as the Old English thorn (th); and many speeches in Shakespeare make better sense when we know the older meaning of some words. For example, in *Ki*



When Shakespeare has Edgar, posing as crazy Tom,

But mice and rats, and such small deer,
Have been Tom's food for seven long year."

intending the speech as part of Tom's craziness—not his use of the word *deer*, for the Anglo-Saxon ant animal, and it was only in later years that it be limited to one special kind of animal. Shake- was only going back to an older use of the word. ight multiply such examples, but that is not neces-

your college work you had no courses in Old English. make a plea with you to take some of this work in the mmer school you attend, for you will find that the f our earlier language has far more bearing upon day life than you had dreamed.

point I have neglected which ought not to be passed d that is the value to the teacher of English litera- a first hand knowledge of world masterpieces in nguages. Those of you who have read the *Aeneid* riginal, those of you who have studied Cicero and have a knowledge of Latin that no translation could give you. Those of you who have read the *Iliad* *Odyssey* in the original or have studied *Beowulf* readth of feeling for literature that will enable you o teach English literature. Just as we cultivate a e sense, we must cultivate a literature sense, and ot do this merely by reading our own present-day e any more than we can be socially as broad as we o be if we know nobody except the people who live own street. To be a real teacher of English, one in his humble way, a real scholar; and a thorough n the part of prospective English teachers of as nguages as they can take in their college life will English classrooms with those who will begin to al scholarship for the coming generation.



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